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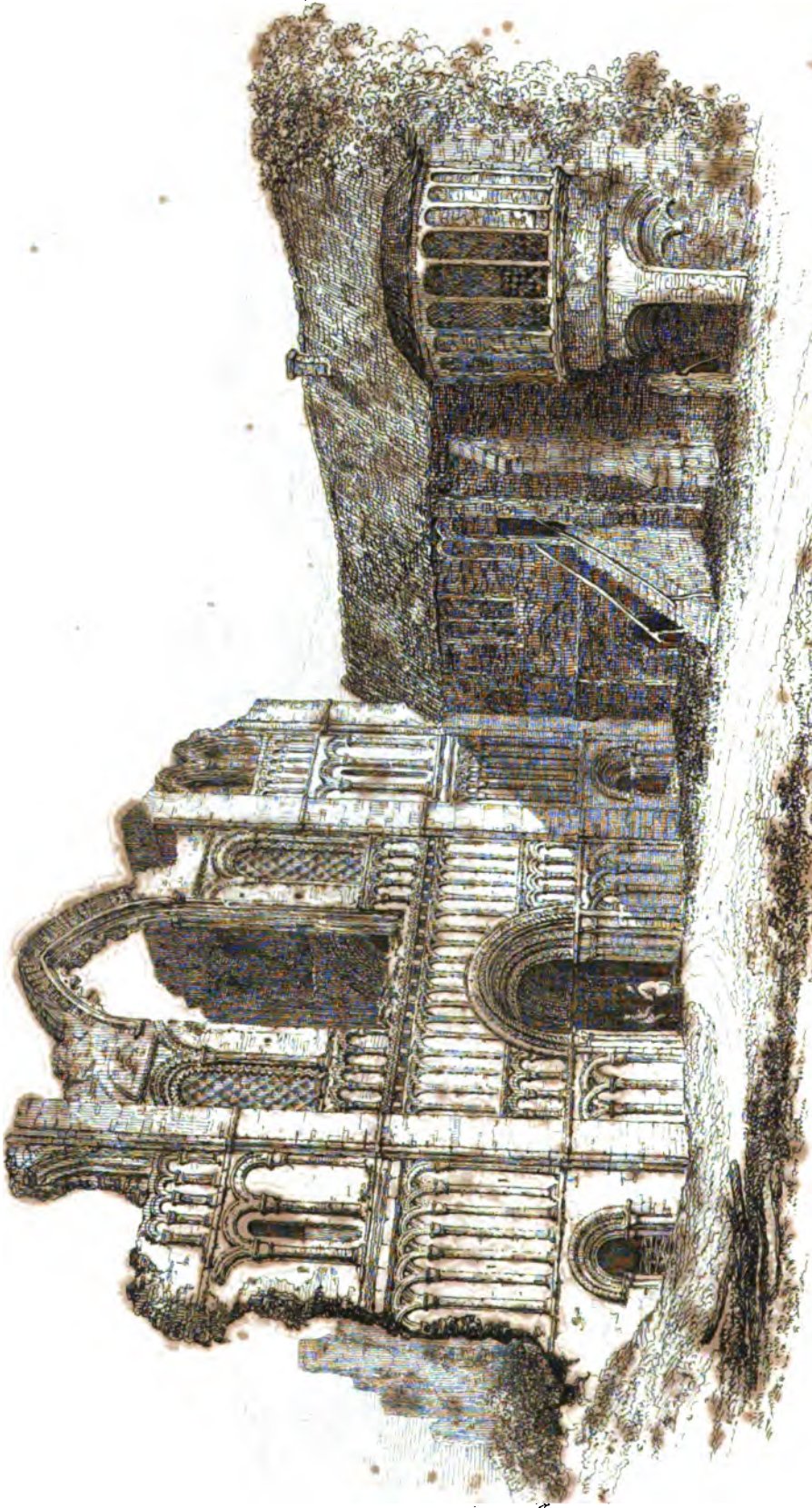
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NOTICES OF
THE CASTLE AND PRIORY AT CASTLEACRE.



Engraved by H. Wilson, from a Drawing by C. Wright.

THE PRIORY, CASTLE ACRE.

NOTICES,
Historical and Antiquarian,
OF
THE CASTLE AND PRIORY AT
CASTLEACRE,
IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

BY
THE REV. J. H. BLOOM, B.A.
VICAR OF CASTLEACRE, AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF SUSSEX.

WITH
TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS, BY SLY, VIZETELLY, AND NINHAM,
FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS, BY MR. CHARLES WRIGHT.

LONDON:
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TO
THE RIGHT HON. THOMAS WILLIAM COKE,
EARL OF LEICESTER, VISCOUNT COKE, BARON CASTLECRE,
&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

THE following pages were prepared for publication under the auspices of ONE, whose condescending kindness in my youth, and patronage in my maturer years, are deeply impressed on my grateful memory. To Him, by generous permission, would they have been inscribed,—but “the huge oak has fallen that grew on the brow of the hill, and sheltered such an extent of ground.”

The recollection of the Father's favour, encourages me to seek, with respectful hope, the countenance of the Son, and to dedicate to your Lordship this humble description of a venerable portion of your Lordship's possessions.

That the virtues and noble qualities of your revered Father will be illustrated in your Lordship's life, is the presage of all,—of none, with more sure reliance, than of

Your Lordship's
Most humble and obedient Servant,

JOHN H. BLOOM.

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PREFACE.

It is the object of the succeeding pages to present the reader with a succinct account, historical and descriptive, of a locality which has for many years attracted the interest of the antiquary, and is still annually resorted to by considerable numbers during the summer months for the picturesque and peculiar character of its scenery. The accounts hitherto extant of the interesting features of which we are about to speak are, generally, not only meagre and unsatisfactory, (which may reasonably be attributed to the paucity of authentic materials,) but so devoid of method and in some respects contradictory, as to bewilder rather than to gratify the curiosity of the inquirer. Much matter, also bearing on the subject, is diffused among scarce and voluminous tomes, and seems to have been altogether overlooked by former investi-

gators, although so intimately associated with the matter under consideration. We have endeavoured to gather under one focus, from various and scattered sources, so much relating to the past history and present condition of the remains, as can be correctly authenticated, supported by careful personal examination, and we have invoked the combined aid of pencil and pen in order to afford an additional proof that notwithstanding the just and admirable exertions of our travellers, in the investigation of the glories of ancient art abroad, there is still, within the scarcely known circle of some of our rural villages, very much to interest at home.

A preface would hardly be complete without its share of apology, and surely never was there greater need of its exercise than in the present instance, for many insurmountable obstacles have intervened to frustrate the original purpose of the Author in carrying out his plan.

But if the severity of criticism (as we sensibly feel)

requires to be deprecated with regard to the text, we entertain an assured hope that the accompanying illustrations will at once attain a position superior to such a contingency. We can vouch for their accurate fidelity, and it scarcely needs the assurance that our esteemed and generous coadjutor, Mr. Wright, is *not* a professional artist, to secure for them warm commendation as works of art. It is a happy circumstance when the dry technicalities of one of the learned professions can be thus ably relieved by the exercise of so delightful a resource. The whole of the drawings, faithfully transferred by Messrs. Sly, Vizetelly, and Ninham, are the production of this gentleman's friendly pencil, and he must permit us to record this public tribute of our warmest thanks for his invaluable assistance.

Our grateful acknowledgments are also due to several esteemed correspondents who have encouraged us in our pursuit and aided us by valuable suggestions; and among them we cannot forbear to particularize the

distinguished name of Dawson Turner, Esq., of Great Yarmouth, and that of the Rev. R. Jackson, some time curate of Castleacre, whose interesting memoranda and collectanea of matters connected with the site have been freely placed at our disposal.

We can scarcely hope that our volume will possess much interest for the general reader, although perchance he may glean therefrom somewhat to reward a patient perusal, but to future visitors to the spot, it will prove, we trust, as clear as it is a faithful guide. The want of such a guide has long been felt, and we are ambitious to supply the office. Visitors to the ruins during the last half century cannot fail to have formed some acquaintance with a curious but worthy character, a sort of Old Mortality, native to and resident on the spot, possessing an admiration for the ruins almost akin to idolatry, who has during the above period filled the post of *cicerone* to the several parties resorting thither. No passing visitor to Castleacre but will recall to mind old John Goate. With much of truth in his

descriptions, there has always been such an intermixture of strange conclusion, adhered to with all the pertinacity of garrulous age, that a smile has been the general result of his communications, to which nothing but the enthusiasm which he entertains for the attractions of his native parish could possibly render him unconscious. Our poor old friend still lives, but at such an advanced period of life, that we may venture, without impropriety, to supersede his services, and supply the visitor with an equally minute and more carefully digested account of the remains.

We will only add that the compilation of the ensuing pages has proved the alleviation of many a painful hour, and if they succeed in rescuing from oblivion some facts and peculiarities of interest connected with the by-gone events of our national history, they will not have been given to the world in vain.

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THE CLUNIACS.



HE local characteristics of an obscure country parish may not altogether be deemed of sufficient interest to merit public attention. It requires the graceful simplicity of a Gilbert White, or the fascinating pen of a Mitford, to invest the generality of our rural districts with that measure of attraction in which, it must be owned, they are frequently so deficient as to warrant the conclusion.

But there are exceptions. There are localities, barren of interest in themselves, still presenting conspicuous traces of historical landmarks towering above the deepening current of the stream of time—spots in our “merrie” land so intimately associated with recollections of the past, so fraught with the spirit, acquirements, and

customs of a by-gone age, that an examination into their history will amply repay the curiosity of the inquirer; whether, as an antiquary, he seek for traces of the labours and pursuits of former generations; or, as a moralist, he ponder over the instability of all earthly tenure; or, as an eager reader, he skim their storied annals, to beguile the tedium of a vacant hour.

To this class, we would fain believe, belong the details which it is the purpose of the following pages to submit to the reader. Though now conspicuous for little but its scattered and picturesque ruins, the parish of Castleacre, in the county of Norfolk, has been the scene of feudal state and cloistered importance. The warder's horn has rung from bastion and battlement, the clank of mail-clad vassals has sounded in its castle courts, the deep-toned vesper-bell has flung its heavy booming far and wide along the sequestered valley of the Nar, and where is the lover of romance who will question the interest implied in the very association of Castle and Convent?

But fiction, however alluring the opportunity, is no part of our present purpose. The simple records we have to offer, are confined to plain matter of fact, and

our history of the past as well as our detail of the present, in all that relates to the subject before us, will be strictly regulated by such authentic data as careful research and personal examination have enabled us to glean.

We invite the courteous reader, then, to divest himself, as far as possible, of those every-day associations which crowd upon his attention in this age of intellectual refinement and luxury. Let a veil fall between his mind's eye and the miracles of art and science which teem amid the onward progress of the nineteenth century, and let him in imagination travel back with us to a rude stern age when huge dark massy strongholds, bearing the very impress of the time, frowned restraint upon the subject land, and cloistered cells, the sheltering retreats of civilisation and science,—welcome oases in the desert of darkness,—reared their friendly portals in every district of the country.

And, as a suitable introduction to the bulk of that which follows, it will be necessary to take a brief glance at the monastic system in its origin and as it was subsequently exercised ; a subject so fertile in inquiry, that the difficulty is how to condense the innumerable points for discussion to which a detailed examination of it must

give rise, but which we have only space very hastily and imperfectly to touch upon.

“Monachism,” observes Fosbroke, “was an institution founded upon the first principles of religious virtue, wrongly understood and wrongly directed. If voluntary confinement, vegetable eating, perpetual praying, wearing coarse clothing, and mere automatical action through respiration, be the standard of excellence, then the best man is only a barrel-organ set to psalm-tunes. Sleep, according to this plan, ought to be virtue.”

It must be admitted that a survey of the general features of monastic life will furnish ample material to justify the somewhat caustic definition of this able and diligent antiquary, but it were unfair to infer that defects which would seem to have ripened from circumstance are wholly attributable to the unsoundness of the system in its origin. Undoubtedly, monachism is justly chargeable with many and heavy abuses, but surely we should not argue its utility or advantages from such adventitious grounds as these. It is, perhaps, peculiarly difficult for the professor of a reformed faith so entirely to divest himself of a natural prejudice as to examine with strict impartiality the merits or demerits

of a system which is only generally known to him in its connexion with a church from many of whose opinions and practices he so widely differs, but it should be carefully borne in mind that the principle of seclusion from the world and religious retirement, in short, monachism, obtained to a considerable extent long before the Papal church attained its predominant ascendancy, or even that its temporal head was recognised by a pliant hierarchy as Universal Bishop. Monachism, then, *per se*, is not identical with Popery, and in its origin must be viewed apart from that creed. But to the lamentable perversions of the Roman church may be referred that nascent departure from primitive simplicity and comparative purity which in after ages issued in gross abuse, blind superstition, and imperious bearing, and obtained for the monasteries the scorn and indignation of every reflecting mind. The change, though gradual, has been sure, and monachism has lost for ever probably the respect and consideration which its simple and unassuming character obtained for it at its institution. For our present purpose, therefore, we can only contemplate monachism in its association with a church with which for centuries it has been connected, and within whose pale it still exists, shorn indeed of its ancient glories. And

what monachism has been for centuries, there is too much reason to apprehend she still continues to be,—in spirit, at least, if not in fact, although the well-informed Romanist of the nineteenth century would unhesitatingly repudiate much of that which distinguished the principle and practice of ancient monachism as repugnant to common sense and the solemn character of religious responsibility. Doubtless many gross absurdities and revolting practices have given place to habits and practices of a more reasonable nature, but if we only bear in mind the immutability which ecclesiastical Rome assumes as her prerogative, we may readily conceive that, so far as monachism is concerned, our inference is justifiable.

Whatever may be thought of the matter now, it is certain that for several centuries monastic institutions obtained considerable favour at the hands of the devout, both lay and clerical. Not only were religious houses among the first works of the wealthy and powerful, but new orders multiplied with a rapidity which will be remarkably illustrated by an examination of the following

TABLE OF THE PRINCIPAL RELIGIOUS ORDERS,

WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE DATES OF INSTITUTION.

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Monks and Nuns of Monte Casino (before)	526
Monks of St. Gregory	595
Monks and Nuns of St. Columba	524
The Cluniacs	912
Camaldule Monks	1012
Valombrosa Monks	1040
Regular Canons of St. Lawrence	1050
Regular Canons of St. Denis	1067
Camaldule Nuns	1073
Grandmont Monks	1076

	A.D.
Ieronimites	1366
Eremites of Mont Bel	1380
Franciscan Friars of the Strict Observance	1402
Friars of St. Ambrose	1431
Carmelite Nuns	1452
Minims, or Frères of St. Paul	1452
Nuns Minims	1495
White Penitents	1503
Indian Monks	1506
Capuchin Friars	1528
Barnabites	1530
Jesuites	1534
Ursuline Nuns	1537

A glance at the foregoing enumeration will suffice to show how surprisingly monastic institutions were multiplied between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries, the mania for such establishments apparently being at its height during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in the course of the former fifteen and in the latter no less than twenty-seven new orders making their appearance. An interval of nearly four centuries occurs between the years 595 and 912, when no distinct order of religious was established ; but, with this exception, no century elapses during the long period first mentioned,

without witnessing the organization of some one or more societies whose ramifications spread far and wide over the face of the Christianized world, according to the extent of their respective merit, influence, or wealth. The list of fresh claimants upon the zeal and devotion of the religious community closes only with the æra of the Reformation, when the order of Ursuline Nuns appears to terminate the series.

That such a multiplicity of societies, having one principle in common, though differing from each other in details, possessed considerable attraction at the respective periods in which they originated, cannot be doubted, and the piety and zeal of the great and powerful of the earth were conspicuously displayed in their foundation and endowment. It has already been remarked that the heavy abuses which subsequently so conspicuously perverted these establishments cannot justly be charged upon the principle of their foundation, which was uniformly a sound and benevolent one, however their benefactors may have been influenced by superstition or the pride of wealth. Seclusion from the world, bodily mortification, and active benevolence were, at least, the ostensible motives which prompted their establishment; and however imperfectly these objects were carried out

in the end, the feeling which actuated the attempt cannot be amenable to censure. At the present stage of the Christian dispensation, we contemplate the like results under a more spiritual light, and we have abundant proof that a saving measure of personal sanctity, through grace, is attainable by the faithful soldier of the Cross amid his daily intercourse with the world, to the full as effectually as by the pale ascetic in the gloom and austerity of his cloister, however fervent his zeal or unaffected his devotion.

But, let it not be forgotten that if monachism be not indispensable to a due attainment of the Christian character, it has other and less questionable claims upon our veneration and respect.

To monastic institutions we owe, in a very great degree, the preservation of much—we might say all that is valuable and instructive in science, literature, and art during a long night of intellectual gloom and mental torpidity. But for its monasteries, the civilized world, there is little room to doubt, would have lost all trace of those valuable records of a bye-gone age to which the scholar turns with ever-new delight; the master-spirits of Greece and Rome whose deeds and words still fill us with admiration might have descended to us as a dreamy

name, and the as yet unsurpassed glories of ancient art might, as they were occasionally brought to light, have been to us an inexplicable riddle. In short, the scholar, the lover of art, and the man of science owe a debt to monastic institutions which can never be forgotten.

Nor is it in reference to such results alone that these establishments have a claim upon our regard. The benevolence which formed a part of the monastic profession was not an empty vaunt, but practical, liberal and extensive. It were hard to say what might have been the fate of thousands of the indigent at a period when no public provision was made for them in seasons of need and suffering, but for the monasteries; nor can the cottier of the nineteenth century, humble as his circumstances may be, form an estimate of the bitter privation which too generally fell to the lot of his peers in the middle ages. Degraded to the lowest station of social existence, neglected and spurned by his superiors in rank, the pauper of that time, when no longer able to slave for the miserable pittance extorted for him at the cost of the severest toil, borne down by sickness and infirmity, or the pressure of adverse fate, might perish, miserably perish, unnoticed and unknown; but at the gates of abbeys, priories, and myncheries, his tale of suf-

This was the usual order of social duty for every day, the monks retiring to rest at eight o'clock in the evening, and rising about two hours after midnight. But this was only a portion of their allotted business ; private prayer, penances, reading, and meditation, both in the retirement of the dormitory and of the cloister, were strictly required ; and when to these we add the extraordinary increase of devotional exercise demanded upon the occasion of every solemn fast, high festival, and holy day, we may form some conception of the ceaseless occupation of their time. The wonder is how and where they could find opportunity of relaxation from these engrossing pursuits, to apply to those studies and engage in those employments which we are aware they nevertheless successfully cultivated.

The remarks in which we have hitherto engaged apply to the monastic profession generally, and relate to duties which, in a greater or less degree, were incumbent upon all who took the vows upon them, although doubtless they varied in intensity according to the peculiar tenets and regulations of different orders of religious. The very essence of austerity would seem to have been concentrated in the habits and practices of that peculiar order to which the foundation at Castleacre was

appropriated, and of these we shall now proceed to give a sketch.

That distinct branch of the Benedictine order of monks known as the Cluniacs, originated, as it appears from the preceding table, in the year 912, and derived its appellation from a large and powerful establishment at Clugny, in Burgundy, a foundation which proved the parent institution of a numerous and wealthy fraternity, branching out over various portions of continental Europe, and obtaining considerable favour in our own country. A certain Abbot of Gigni, himself a member of the distinguished family of the Earls of Bourgogne, and subsequently canonised as St. Bernon, in a laudable zeal for the purity of the monastic system, which even at that early period began to manifest symptoms of corruption, was the originator of this specific order. Conforming generally to the rule of St. Benedict, the Cluniacs were nevertheless separatists from that body, had peculiarities of their own, and were distinguished by an augmented measure of austerity and formal observance.

Their characteristic costume consisted in a long and ample tunic of very coarse material, over which was worn a large full-sleeved cowl, a hood falling as low as

the elbows, and a rochet or tabard extending from the chin to the feet.

Their devotions were regulated with extreme strictness and formality. Two solemn masses were celebrated every day; and during the hours of service no labour whatever was permitted within the precincts of the establishment. Even should a monk be about to leave the monastery upon any labour of love or necessity, and his foot were in the stirrup, should the bell toll for prayer, he was compelled temporarily to forego his purpose, and to repair to join his brethren in the church. Silence was absolutely required, as far as possible, throughout the day, and so rigidly enforced after compline until prime, that it was almost death to violate it. In consequence of this stern regulation, the employment of manual signs was generally substituted for words among the brethren. Reading and meditation followed every stated interval of prayer, the fasts were observed with rigid severity, and for three consecutive days before Easter the communion was extended to all. To such an extent was carried the prohibition of social intercourse, that whenever any of the brethren were occupied by manual labour in the garden or grounds of the precinct, they were required to sing psalms somewhat lustily, in

order to guard against protracted conversation. There were seasons, however, when this rigid enactment was relaxed, as we shall have occasion to notice presently. The alms-giving and benevolence of the Cluniacs were exercised to an extraordinary extent. By a fundamental rule of the order, they were required to feed eighteen poor persons daily, who regularly attended at the almonry and hostel for that purpose, whilst the remains of the bread and wine used daily in the services of the church were regularly distributed to wayfarers, paupers, and pilgrims. But during the whole of Lent, and upon all occasions of special mortification and humility, the customary largess of these bountiful monastics was doubled and trebled in amount, and the necessities of an incredible number were suitably relieved; nor was the bounty so dispensed restricted to the indigent residing in the immediate neighbourhood of the monastery, but was extended alike to the stranger and the wayfarer without question or partiality.

The habits of these religious were not less conspicuous for their singularity. The monks were usually restricted to one good meal per day, with a slight and hasty refectation at an early hour in the morning; yet even this one meal, except unto special occasions, was ordinarily

of the simplest, nay coarsest kind, a standing dish with them being a not very inviting mess of black beans and salt; an article of diet tersely commemorated in the following lines:—

*Esse niger monachus si velim forte Cluniaci
Qua fabasque nigras cum sale sæpe dabunt.*

SPEC. STULT.

Upon occasions, however, of festival, and on the octaves of Christmas and the Epiphany, they were allowed to partake of two full meals, with a larger variety in the nature and quality of “the creature comforts” than ordinary. On the feasts referred to, also, they were permitted to assemble in the refectory after dinner, nones, and reading in the cloister, (which observances, whatever might be the occasion, were strictly maintained,) for the purposes of social refreshment and intercourse; these privileges never being allowed on common occasions until after vespers, and then for a very limited period. After refection came reading again, and this was followed by a spiritual lecture which lasted until compline.

Although every religious establishment had an ample proportion of servants for the discharge of menial offices, the regular members of a Cluniac fraternity were not exempt from some share in such service, either as matter

of penance, duty, or inclination ; and accordingly specific regulations were framed, to be observed by them when occupied in those employments. When engaged in the kitchen or other offices, they usually wore additional sleeves over their tunics, that they might not be defiled by contact with the several vessels ; and in shifting the cauldron on the fire, they were careful to protect the hand by a substantial glove. They were scrupulously particular in sweeping the kitchen clean every Saturday immediately after vespers, and, at the ringing of a bell, they repaired to the lavatory to wash and comb.

But perhaps the most striking peculiarity of this order was the extraordinary form and ceremony employed by them in preparing the wafer for the celebration of mass. Four monks, ecclesiastics, assisted by one layman, were usually appointed to this duty. Their first care was to select the wheat, grain by grain, from a quantity of the finest and purest quality that could be procured. Having thus obtained a sufficiency for their purpose, the selected wheat was carefully washed, and then enclosed in a bag reserved expressly for that purpose. Thus it was sent to the mill by the hands of the layman, whose character and general disposition for piety were matters of scru-

pulous observation. It was then his duty to wash the millstones, and to surround them on every side with linen curtains reserved for that purpose, that no particle of the precious meal might escape. During the process of grinding, the attendant was to be veiled from head to foot, the eyes only appearing; and in the subsequent preparation of the flour the same ceremonious care prevailed. At length, when all was in readiness, the ecclesiastics, clothed in albs, after stated devotions, proceeded to manufacture the wafer, which was done with the most punctilious washings both of face, hands, and the metal moulds in which the wafer was to be baked, so that no extraneous matter could wilfully be introduced into the purified compound.

In short, the habits of the Cluniacs were characterised in every department by precise singularity; and an ancient author sums up their peculiarities in the following not very attractive terms. "When you wish to sleep," he says, "they awake you; when you wish to eat, they make you fast. The night is passed in praying in the church; the day, in working; and there is no repose but in the refectory;—and what is to be found there? Rotten eggs, beans with all their pods on, and liquor fit

for oxen ; for the wine is so poor that one might drink of it for a month without intoxication *."

The picture of the Cluniac profession which we have thus endeavoured to embody from the scattered records of received authorities, will serve to show that the career of a monk of this denomination, if a strict observer of the rules of his order, must have been one of severe deprivation and austerity ; and we should be at a loss to imagine what there could possibly be in the system to conciliate the favour of its numberless adherents, did not experience teach us that some degree of singularity is congenial to the human breast, and that a profession of unusual self-denial and mortification, real or affected, is often wont to obtain for its professors a greater measure of credit for superior sanctity than a searching examination might in the end justify. At all events, the issue does not appear to have fulfilled the purport of the means ; for eventually the Cluniacs acquired a reputation for laxity, both of discipline and morals, completely opposed to the self-mortifying nature of their original principles.

In this respect, however, they were amenable to censure in common with the greater part of other monastic orders,

* Guy de Provins.

upon whom a sort of judicial infatuation seems to have fallen, to accelerate their ruin and extinction. A gradual relaxation in the rigour of their respective rules by degrees gave place to indifference, and, intoxicated by the uninterrupted enjoyment of successive years of prosperity and increasing power, the monasteries engaged heart and soul to promote the purposes of that Church whose "pious frauds" are not amongst the least of her inexplicable and crying offences. The sagacity of Rome readily perceived in these establishments a powerful engine for the extension of her influence, and, yielding to her fatal ascendancy, the result may be easily foreseen: they were among the first to encounter the outburst of the storm directed against her and all connected with her. It is only requisite to scan the melancholy record of opinions promulgated and practices encouraged under the direct authority and sanction of the Church of Rome—of which the conventual churches of abbeys and myncheries were usually the scene, and where warm supporters of the profanity were always to be found,—to form some estimate of the outrages perpetrated against all that is sacred and venerable under the desecrated guise of religion. An example or two, from, unfortunately, an *ample* field of abuse, will suffice to illustrate

the nature of those monstrous perversions to which the monks were wont to lend themselves. We must premise that these *solemnities* were enacted annually under the direction of bishops, abbots, priors, and other dignitaries of the Roman Church, with all due seriousness and formality.

“The Feast of Fools” was celebrated in various masquerades of women, lions, players, &c. They danced and sung in the choir; ate fat cakes upon the horns of the altar, where the celebrating priest *played at dice*; put *stinking stuff* from the leather of old shoes into the censer; ran, jumped, &c. through the church!*

Upon what plea is it possible to justify absurdity so revolting as this? Could it in any way serve or promote the awfully responsible ends of religion, or add dignity or weight to its ordinances? We are at a loss to define the infatuation which could sanction such miserable folly; and yet, wretched as it is, it is fully equalled, or rather surpassed, by another performance with which the devotee of that day was also periodically regaled.

“The Fool Bishop, at mattins, high mass, and vespers, with his chaplain, was to preside for three days pontifically on the episcopal throne, properly adorned! from

* Fosbroke, p. 81.

whence, on the introit of the said hours, he was to be clothed in the vestiary with a common silk cope, and adorned with a mitre and silk gloves. The chaplain was to be clothed likewise in a common silk cope, carrying on his head *a little cushion* instead of the cap. *Incense-bearers and the apparitor* preceded the Fool Bishop to the episcopal throne. There, with his chaplain sitting at his feet, having always a cross in his hand, he sat as long as the above hours were celebrating. The sub-deacon who was to sing the epistle, or the deacon the gospel, *with one knee bent, made him a supplication*, whom he marked with his right hand !”*

Comment is superfluous. It may readily be imagined to what all this inane ribaldry would eventually lead ; the contempt naturally engendered by the idle buffoonery of the mock prelate was in process of time transferred to the real one, and the consequences recoiled with additional force upon the system which originated and could sanction such proceedings. Other cases of a like nature might be cited, such as the Boy Bishop, the Festival of the Ass, &c., equally calculated to bring ridicule upon the rites and ordinances of religion, and to fill every reflecting mind with unmitigated disgust. And

* Fosbroke, p. 80.

these were the exhibitions tolerated and encouraged in the palmy days of monachism, and of which their cloistered precincts were not unfrequently the arena. No stronger proof than this can be required to mark the degeneracy of monastic institutions, and their departure from the very purport and principle of their foundation; and whatever might have been the popular enthusiasm in their favour in their earlier years, it was not long before a visible reaction displayed itself. No sooner had the twelfth century drawn to a close, than the zeal which had been so profusely manifested towards the monasteries in the shape of gifts, grants, and bequests, began to decline; recurring at rare and uncertain intervals, they at length ceased altogether. The grasping spirit evinced by some of these establishments may have contributed in some degree to this result; but there is little doubt that the increasing laxity and indifference apparent in their conduct mainly tended to accelerate their declension in the popular esteem. About this time, also, a new channel was opened for the exercise of pious zeal and munificence, to which the bounteous current that had once flowed so lavishly towards the monasteries was now transferred. Two new orders made their appearance whose profession was poverty—their wealth, the scrip

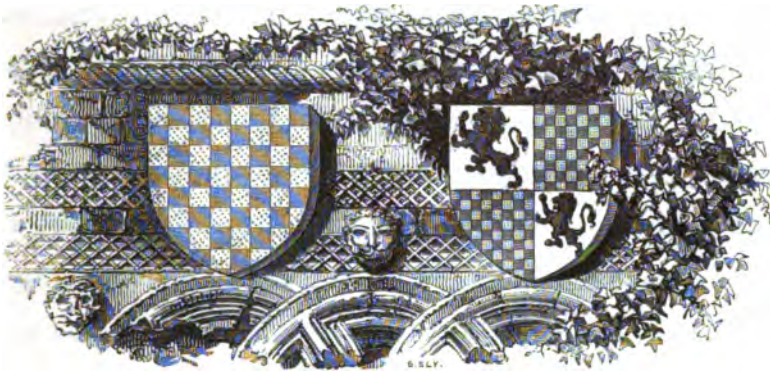
and staff; these were the Dominicans and Franciscans—or Friars Mendicants, as they were generally termed. The contrast presented by the profession and appearance of these fresh claimants upon pious sympathy, to the pride, wealth, and luxurious ease of the established orders, was well calculated to work a powerful effect, and before long they completely distanced their more indolent competitors in the race for popular favour. The very profession of poverty, borne out by the palpable indifference to the wealth and pomp of the monks and other ecclesiastics, evinced by these Friars, obtained for them an extraordinary degree of sympathy, something akin to that formerly displayed towards the older orders of monachism, when at their first institution they pleaded the same vow of poverty; whilst the activity and zeal they employed in the discharge of their ministerial office secured for them that enthusiasm to which their appearance had already inclined the popular bias. Within, however, no great length of time, the establishments of the mendicants themselves became gradually possessed of ample revenues and extensive estates; and then the same growing spirit of laxity and indifference, as well as a corresponding decline in popular sympathy, fell to their share. A new light began to break upon the horizon of

the religious world, and the first clear line that served to herald the approach of a flood of glorious sunshine beamed upon the world in the person of John de Wycliffe. From that moment monachism, in all its various phases, began to totter from the ascendant position it had so long occupied, until at length the watchword of Reformation rung from one end of Europe to the other, and out-thundered the palsied fulminations of the Vatican itself. In the sweeping changes consequent upon this mighty moral revolution, the original motive and intent of monastic institutions was lost sight of; abuse and use were confounded, and whatever there might be of good or evil commendable or reprehensible in the constitution of such societies, was indiscriminately sacrificed in the resistless torrent.

Thus fell monastic establishments, after centuries of increasing power and splendour; and though the immediate results were fatal to their existence only in this land, the system itself, throughout the countries where Papal ascendancy still prevails, received a shock which it has never since surmounted. In England ruins, widely scattered in every direction, are all that is left to attest the former prevalence of monachism amongst us, and these are regarded with an interest proportioned to the

many associations which the sight of them is calculated to excite. Of late years, indeed, some partial attempts have been made by the Roman Church to revive the system in the very heart of a Protestant country; but many of its most prominent features are no longer to be recognised, and happily so. The character of modern monachism in England possesses more of the original intent and spirit; its professors are generally quiet, unpretending persons, who have doubtless associated from zealous and conscientious motives, and who discharge their self-imposed duties faithfully and unobtrusively. How long this retiring spirit might be maintained were the discipline of Rome again to be predominant amongst us, it is not our business to discuss; nor is such a consummation to be wished, on many serious accounts. The Cluniacs, however, are extinct; and the land that once teemed with members of their rigid order, now knows them no more. At least forty-five distinct establishments of this order once existed in our land, and these were fully organised and completed within less than a century and a half;—the first introduction of the order being effected by William, first Earl de Warrenne and Surrey, and the last house in connexion with it being founded in the latter years of

Stephen's reign. On continental Europe, the order obtained in Spain, Italy, Germany, Lombardy, and to an unprecedented degree in France, where its monasteries exceeded those of all other orders; thus evincing that, notwithstanding its peremptory restrictions, the Cluniac rule was in especial favour with the enthusiastic and devout. For a considerable period, the principals of the houses of this order in England were invariably foreigners, generally supplied from the parent foundations in France; but after the increasing importance of the dependent cells enabled the greater part of them to throw off the trammels of subserviency, the superiors were elected by the several chapters from among their own fraternity, and thus their monasteries became exclusively native. The moral canker at length infected the austere severity of Cluniac discipline, and many ingenious substitutes were devised in place of the rigid requirements of the founder, until little more than the name remained to mark the distinctive character of the order. Since then, the shadow has departed as well as the substance; and the pious labours of the Abbot of Gigni live but in the memory of the past.



ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF DE WARRENNE AND ARUNDEL, UPON ARCHITECTURAL PEDIMENT.

DE WARRENNE AND SURREY.



DXTRÊMELY scanty (as might be expected from the imperfect chronicles which relate to the period in which they flourished,) are the records which remain to us of some of the most powerful families that in a remote age constituted a portion of the ancient nobles of our land. Unless their names occur in association with the stirring events of the time which are matters of public history, it is rarely that they occupy a position sufficiently prominent

to attract the attention of the chronicler, and the biographer is able to glean at best but a meagre outline of characters, which, from their importance in other respects, would seem to require detailed expatiation. In some respects, however, this circumstance may be deemed not altogether unfortunate, for in a great number of instances the quality of the information obtained will scarce repay to the curious inquirer the labour of research; and however he may delight to pore over musty tomes and to unravel the mysteries of worm-drilled chronicles, the issue will too frequently be disappointment, as the ideal attributes of nobility and distinction, with which eager imagination is prone to invest its favourite hero, are scattered to the winds by the glaring evidence of moral worthlessness and insignificance.

Charity, nevertheless, will cling to the hope that if the worst traits of character unhappily survive, it is because

“——the evil that men do lives after them ;
The good is oft interred with their bones ;”

and that much redeeming excellence is lost to us through the waywardness or partiality of the historian.

Generally speaking, there is so much obscurity and intermixture of legendary matter in the annals of our ancient worthies, that it is no easy task to sift their

incongruous material in order to arrive at a simple and explicit approximation to the truth; and this remark applies with peculiar force to the records which relate to the members of that once powerful and illustrious family of whom, from their intimate connexion with the Castle and domain of Acre, it behoves us to present a sketch. The very name of De Warrenne exists but in the faint traces of the past, and a family once prominently conspicuous for its powerful influence and princely wealth, associated with royalty and distinguished for military prowess, has long since ceased to own a living representative. For some centuries they occupied a prominent station in the courts of princes, and enjoyed a measure of prosperity and influence vouchsafed to few, until at length their grandeur passed away as a dream, and the extraordinary possessions held by them were dispersed into various channels unassociated by title or kin with the original proprietors. The family cognizance, *or and azure chequè*, still holds a place in the quarterings of the illustrious house of Norfolk, with whom, in centuries gone by, it was connected by marriage; and this is all that is now left to indicate the individuality and family importance of De Warrenne.

The armorial bearings introduced at the head of this

section, represent respectively those of De Warrenne, simple *or and azure chequè*; and those of Arundel, lions rampant quartered with De Warrenne. They occur among the remains, and will be particularized hereafter.

William, first Earl de Guarrenne (Warrenne), in Normandy, and of Surrey in England, was the chief of a family among the most powerful and illustrious of his native land. Enjoying the intimate friendship and confidence of the Conqueror, with whom he was nearly connected by his marriage with Gondreda, the fourth daughter of that prince, it is natural that he should form one of that reckless band of chivalrous adventurers who followed the fortunes of their ambitious master on his daring and successful inroad on our isle.

The little group of bold spirits who constituted the ducal court of Normandy had long contemplated with eager desire the fair broad lands and domains of England, and were not backward, on the first intimation of their liege lord's determination, to avail themselves of the opportunity. The prospect of rich remuneration which the Duke of Normandy held out to his devoted followers in the event of success, was sufficient in itself to inflame their determination in an age when bold and daring exploits were deemed the surest tests of distinction; and

it is said that even before a foot was planted on the deck of the flotilla which was to bear them to our shores, the broad lands of "merrie England" were parcelled out among the rapacious crew. The successful issue of a contest which was destined to effect so extensive a change in the character of an empire, is well-known matter of history. No wonder, then, that upon the event of the memorable field of Hastings,—(the first, though by no means the last step necessary to the Conquest,)—the triumph and exultation of the victorious Normans should be represented as partaking of a degree of extravagance allied to delirium. Such was the transport of their savage fury, we are informed, that they caused their horses to prance and plunge over the thickly-strewed bodies of the devoted Anglo-Saxons, and spurned their prostrate foe with an indignity utterly incompatible with a noble and magnanimous spirit.

Among those who took part in the business of that eventful day, and in many an after conflict in the service of his chief, was William de Warrenne, whose zeal and devotion met with prompt attention and reward.

The first act of his royal master towards him was to create him Earl of Surrey, and then to put him in possession of such vast domains as in point of extent and

revenue amounted to a little principality. The official situation which he occupied at the court of the Conqueror, was that of Justiciary of the Kingdom ; a circumstance which proves that De Warrenne possessed ability of no mean order, independently of his military distinction. His colleague in this responsible office was Richard de Bienfait, and their names occur among those of the counsellors of state associated with Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, the half-brother of the Conqueror, in the government, when William revisited Normandy after his first partial subjugation of the kingdom. History bears melancholy testimony to the harshness and oppression employed by these haughty barons during their temporary conduct of affairs ; treatment which effectually roused a spirit of resistance on the part of the English, that it cost their stern masters an infinity of labour and anxiety to subdue. With these oppressions originated a long series of painful convulsions, which, it is shrewdly suspected, was the very issue contemplated by the subtle William in his temporary retirement to Normandy, that so a fair pretext might be supplied for the forcible and complete subjugation of the country ;—if this were his motive, the purpose was amply realised.

The substantial acknowledgments received by De

Warrenne as his share of the *spolia opima* may be summed up in a few words. In the county of Norfolk alone, the Conqueror bestowed upon him the possession of and right over no less than one hundred and thirty-nine lordships,—in the county of Suffolk eighteen more, at least an equal number in the county of Sussex, besides vast possessions in the northern counties—enough, one would think, to satisfy the cravings of the most rapacious spirit. Of all his extensive territories, his lordship of Acre, unceremoniously wrested from an unfortunate Saxon thane, attracted the Norman's peculiar regard; and here, so soon as the partial settlement of affairs consequent upon the Conquest would permit of his applying to the work, he hastened to erect his baronial residence, wherein he took up his permanent abode. Vast as were the resources which so wealthy and powerful a noble might bring to bear upon his undertaking, the work was doubtless one of time as well as of considerable labour, nor is it probable that its completion was perfected at the period of the earl's decease some twenty-two years afterward. In the mean while, however, once fairly established in the possession of his broad lands, he appears to have applied himself with considerable activity to works of a more peaceful and commendable

character. A distinguishing trait in the character of our Norman rulers was the mania for founding and endowing religious houses, a disposition which prevailed to a great extent among them ; and if the subject Anglo-Saxons were compelled to groan beneath the iron rule of foreign despotism, they were at least ultimately constrained to acknowledge the advantage which art and industry derived from the splendid projects of their haughty masters.

Partaking of this spirit, in common with his countrymen, De Warrenne determined to apply some portion of his ample revenues to purposes which might bequeath to him a fairer position in the annals of fame than he might otherwise have been destined to enjoy. His first undertaking in this way was to found and endow an extensive priory and hospital at Lewes in Sussex, a foundation which he appropriated to the abbey of Clugny in Burgundy, as a residence for a fraternity in connexion with that religious order. It is simply related that upon some occasion, De Warrenne, accompanied by his Countess, determined upon a pilgrimage to the Holy City, and at an early period of their progress thitherward they availed themselves of the hospitality usually proffered by the monasteries to those who were bent upon a like

pious errand. The reception they experienced at Clugny, and the general character of the religious profession exercised within its walls, so charmed the noble pilgrims, that when in after years an opportunity was presented for carrying into effect a long-cherished desire to found some religious house for the welfare of their souls, they determined to evince their recollection of what they had seen and heard at Clugny by bestowing upon that foundation the house they were about to establish. Thus the priory of Lewes was endowed for the support of twelve Cluniac monks, who, with a certain Lanzo at their head, were despatched somewhere about the year 1078 from the parent establishment to take possession of this new retreat. Their privileges were then duly confirmed to them by charter. Within six years after this, the Earl commenced the foundation of another religious establishment, immediately contiguous to his Castle of Acre, which he appropriated to the same order, and annexed as a cell to his previous foundation at Lewes, both being thus subordinate to the wealthy Abbey of Clugny. Scarcely, however, was the foundation-stone of the Priory of Acre duly laid, than its munificent founder sustained a bereavement for which he was but ill prepared. His wife Gondrede, to whom he seems to have been tenderly

attached, died in child-bed at his baronial castle, on the 27th of May, 1085, and was removed for interment to the new priory church of St. Pancras at Lewes, and there deposited. From this period, the bereaved Earl would seem to have passed the remainder of his days in comparative seclusion, devoting his time to religious exercises, and works of piety and benevolence. A small cell at Heacham owes its origin to his liberality; and at the expiration of four years from the period of his loss he himself was gathered to his fathers, and expired in the month of June, A. D. 1089. It is supposed that his remains were deposited with those of his lamented Countess.

William, second Earl de Warrenne and Surrey, succeeded to the titles and vast possessions of his father. But slender details of his history remain to us; although it appears that he was a suitor, not altogether unfavoured, for the hand of Matilda, daughter of Malcolm King of Scotland, and subsequently Queen-consort of Henry I. The marriage, however, was not sanctioned by Rufus, to whom, and not to the lady's relatives, the demand was made. The Red King, doubtless, had good reasons for the prohibition, in the simple fact that it would have been highly impolitic on his part to encourage a union

between so powerful a vassal and a princess of the ancient Saxon line; and this project failing, it does not appear to whom the Earl was eventually united. Upon the accession of Henry I. we find this De Warrenne associated with the Earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel, Walter Gifford, Aruulf de Montgomery, Robert de Mallet, and other influential barons, in espousing the pretensions of Robert of Normandy, the elder brother of Henry, to the sovereignty of England. These powerful nobles, whose weight and influence would at any time render their opposition formidable, promised to join the Duke with all their forces, immediately upon his landing to assert his right to the throne; and they were true to their engagement. But the result was unsuccessful, and the mild and leisure-loving Robert was speedily won over by his wily and grasping brother to effect a compromise. The defection of his barons was not likely to escape the notice of the crafty Henry, and many of them experienced the full weight of his resentment in the confiscation and alienation of their estates, though their persons were spared. De Warrenne, however, seems to have been so fortunate as to pass without let or molestation, either in purse or person.

In addition to munificent benefactions to the infant

priory of Acre, he founded two other religious houses in distant counties, one at Widkirk in Yorkshire, and the other at Sandtoft in Lincolnshire.

Of William, the third Earl, the historical particulars are equally meagre ; although he is said to have obtained high consideration for services rendered to King Stephen. In requital of these services, this monarch bestowed upon De Warrenne the demeans of the borough of Thetford, together with the advowsons of all the churches on the Suffolk side of that place, of no inconsiderable importance at the period. The Earl, already in the enjoyment of princely possessions, determined forthwith to apply his new acquisitions to pious purposes, and accordingly he commenced at Thetford the foundation of an extensive monastery and church, which he appropriated to the use of the order of Regular Canons of the Holy Sepulchre. This foundation he endowed with all that he had received from the King, and added further grants and privileges of great munificence. His example was followed by his brothers, and other successive members of his family, until the establishment attained to considerable affluence. Like his predecessors, he did not omit to foster his ancestral foundation at Acre, to which he was a liberal benefactor, causing a foundation to be built at Slevesholm

as a cell to that establishment. At this period the torch of enthusiasm kindled a flame that burnt brightly over Europe, and, sharing the common zeal, De Warrenne hastened to join the ranks of the crusaders, carrying numerous and valuable aid to the army under Louis King of France, and the Emperor Conrad. There, in the very centre of the Holy Land, in conflict with "the proud Paynim," he met an honourable death, and his possessions devolved upon his only child Isabel.

Hamlyn Plantagenet*, a member of the illustrious House of Anjou, and nearly connected with the reigning sovereign, as fourth Earl De Warrenne and Surrey, succeeded to the enjoyment of the titles and estates solely in right of his marriage with Isabel, the only child of the deceased Earl. By her he left issue, William, who succeeded to the family honours. Hamlyn does not appear to have partaken in a very great degree of the chivalrous spirit of the time; for it is recorded of him that, having been appointed, during the reign of John, to

* Perhaps the characteristic origin of this distinguished family appellation is not so generally remembered as it deserves to be. Geoffrey of Anjou, the chief of this House, possessed a peculiar predilection for the flower of the common broom plant (*Planta genistæ*), a sprig of which he was not only in the habit of wearing in his bonnet, but his followers were required to do likewise; and thus it became the family cognisance, and ultimately its familiar designation.

serve the office of Justiciary of the Cinque Ports, he declined serving, and was thereupon required to pay the fine of a palfrey to the King for his contumacy. And upon another occasion, in the same reign, he is mentioned as having, in conjunction with the Archbishop of Canterbury, paid a second fine to the same monarch, in order to be released from the obligation of sending their knights and retainers over into Poitou. From these little traits, we may infer this Earl to have been of a retiring and domestic disposition; although it must be noticed that he was by no means indifferent to the stirring events which convulsed the land during the latter portion of the reign of the tyrannous and treacherous John. We find the seal of De Warrenne amongst others appended to that great and memorable Charter which laid the foundation of English liberties, showing that he was of the number of those bold Barons by whose firmness and intrepidity a slow consent was at length wrung from the reluctant and unprincipled monarch. The name of Hamlyn occurs among the liberal benefactors of the Priory at Acre and other religious establishments.

William, fifth De Warrenne and Surrey, survived his father but for a short time; though, having married Maud, a daughter of William Mareschal, Earl of Pembroke, he

left issue, John Plantagenet and Isabella. The former was destined to become a conspicuous character in the annals of his country; the latter was eventually espoused to Hugh de Albini, Earl of Arundel and Sussex, and this seems to have been the first alliance between the two noble families who, by a subsequent intermarriage, became so intimately connected. This Countess of Arundel, partaking of the same pious munificence for which her family were so conspicuous, devoted a considerable portion of her ample dowry to the foundation and support of an Abbey at Marham, appropriated to the use of the Cistercian nuns, an order first introduced into England about the year 1128. This abbey ultimately attained considerable wealth and eminence.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the name of the fifth Earl occurs in the annals of our national history, as taking a part in the serious differences which obtained between Henry III. and his Barons, under the influence of the celebrated Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. De Warrenne appears to have adhered to the King's party, and enjoyed the friendship of Prince Edward. Upon the serious reverses sustained by the royalist forces at the battle of Lewes, De Warrenne made his escape to the Continent, accompanied by the half-brothers

to the King. From thence he subsequently returned, and landed in Wales at the head of one hundred and twenty knights and a troop of archers. His loyal example was speedily followed by other barons who joined his standard; and after a series of successful manœuvres, De Montfort sustained a complete overthrow in the vicinity of Evesham. It cannot be doubted that the devotion of De Warrenne to his master's cause obtained for him the favour and esteem of the monarch.

In our historical notices of the sixth Earl De Warrenne and Surrey, we have a wider field of interest and information to engage our attention. Possessing undaunted firmness, unquestionable courage, and great military talent, John Plantagenet failed not to attract the especial regard of one of the most chivalrous monarchs who ever swayed the sceptre of England. Edward I. well knew how to appreciate the qualities which distinguished one so eminently conspicuous among the wealthy and influential of his barons, and readily availed himself of the powerful aid supplied by his vast resources and experience; nor was the king's judgment in this matter without its advantageous results.

An incident is on record which prominently illustrates the bold and independent spirit of this De Warrenne,

and which, while it involved an act directly opposed to the prevailing desire of the monarch, tended probably in its results to induce the king to win by courtesy that which he utterly failed to obtain by force.

Upon his return from a long and expensive sojourn in France, Edward found the condition of his exchequer to be so impoverished as to require vigorous and active measures for its reparation. Though possessed of many shining and estimable qualities, the king was not particularly scrupulous about the means whereby he proposed to recruit his exhausted finances; and unhesitatingly put in motion measures of so arbitrary a nature that a fierce spirit of resistance was kindled, to such an extent as if not timely checked must have led to consequences most fatal to his authority and interests. Commissioners were appointed, before whom the barons of the realm were summoned to render an account of the titles by which they respectively held their possessions, under the shallow pretext that many encroachments on the rights of the crown had been surreptitiously made by them. It must be confessed that the blow thus aimed at the interests of his haughty vassals was every way characteristic of the intrepidity for which Edward was distinguished, although he somewhat miscalculated the

reception which such policy would encounter from them. The scrutiny was searching and severe: and to some extent the *ruse* of the needy monarch was successful. But the bloodless triumph of Runnimeade was not yet forgotten; and the bold spirit of the barons of England, fired at the summary proceedings levelled against their rights, was effectually roused to resistance. Upon his appearance before the commissioners, in obedience to the summons, the Earl de Warrenne and Surrey, when required by them to produce his title, for all answer deliberately drew his ponderous sword, and pointing to it, exclaimed,—“By *this* instrument do I hold my lands, and by the same I intend to defend them! Our ancestors, coming into this realm with William the Bastard, acquired their possessions with their good swords. William did not make a conquest alone, or for himself solely; our ancestors were helpers and participators with him!”—The fearless earl was no longer urged, for the king was not prepared to dispute the validity of such title-deeds, and De Warrenne escaped unscathed from the ordeal. But others were not so fortunate: for in certain cases where, from the various convulsions to which the land had been subjected, written deeds and grants from the crown had been lost or destroyed,

Edward, without scruple, seized the manors and estates, and would not release them except upon payment of large sums of money by way of ransom.

The foregoing anecdote sufficiently indicates the mettle of this spirited baron ; but it is in the early part of the year 1296 that we first find the name of John de Warrenne occupying a distinguished post in the victorious army of Edward. Our fair sister land,—“land of brown heath and shaggy wood,” will ever associate the recollection of De Warrenne with one of the most momentous periods in the annals of her history.

Baliol of Scotland, who, five short years before, had solemnly sworn fealty and allegiance to Edward, in evil hour, and by the mischievous advice of ambitious counsellors, as solemnly renounced his deliberate pledges. “Madman and foolish traitor !” exclaimed Edward, when the intelligence reached him,—“since he will not come to us, we will go to him.”—To determine and to act were simultaneous with the energetic monarch. De Warrenne, with a select detachment of troops, was commissioned to recover the Castle of Dunbar, which the Countess of March had delivered to the Scots, although her husband was at the very time serving in the army of Edward. And with the investment of this castle commenced a

series of brilliant exploits on Scottish ground, in which De Warrenne obtained prominent distinction.

Although the Scottish army in full force was despatched to the relief of Dunbar Castle, the English troops under De Warrenne hesitated not to give them instant battle ; and on the 28th of April, after a severe encounter, the Scots were completely routed with the extraordinary loss of ten thousand men. The Castle immediately surrendered at discretion. Rapidly following up this brilliant achievement, De Warrenne experienced a series of successes almost without parallel. Within a space of somewhat less than two months, he obtained the surrender of the several Castles of Roxburgh, Dumbarton, Jedburgh, Edinburgh, and Stirling ; the principal strongholds of the kingdom, whose conquest was thus effected. Too late did Baliol endeavour to withdraw the gauntlet of defiance which he had so hastily thrown down before the indignant Edward ; too tardily did he offer abject submission and implore peace ; the victorious southron would exercise a conqueror's right, and Baliol was compelled to a complete surrender of his kingdom and degradation from his kingly state, in terms of the utmost baseness and humiliation.

It was not likely that the important services of the

Earl of Surrey would be overlooked by the exulting monarch. As the most effectual means of securing to himself the peaceful possession of his recent conquest, Edward intrusted the custody of the surrendered castles to English captains, and filled every situation of weight and responsibility with English subjects, appointing John de Warrenne to the exalted post of governor of the realms, with Hugh de Cressingham as treasurer, and William Ormesby as justiciary, to exercise supreme authority.

But the personal favour of the gratified monarch towards his illustrious general did not terminate here. In the early part of the year 1297, when De Warrenne had retreated for a short period from the cares and anxieties of his responsible office to the peaceful and domestic retirement of his own loved castle of Acre, leaving everything in Scotland, to all appearance, in a condition of quiet subjection, Edward, in additional proof of the esteem he entertained for his faithful baron, honoured him with a personal visit, attended by the most distinguished members of his court, and sojourned for the space of three weeks in the ancestral stronghold of the proud and opulent De Warrennes. Then did its massy walls ring with the shout of joy and revelry, its

stately halls and crowded ballium throng with knightly retinue and mailed men, and all the pomp and circumstance of military splendour. But scarcely had the prolonged roar of festivity consequent upon this distinguished visit ceased to echo in its ample courts, than its noble master was again abruptly summoned from the peaceful seclusion of his home, to play his part in the turmoil and activity of vigorous warfare, for Scotland was again in insurrection and making another fierce struggle for territorial independence.

De Warrenne, on leaving his charge for England, had delegated his authority to Ormesby, the justiciary, who acted as his lieutenant, and, for a time, all went on in peace and tranquillity. But volcanic fires slumbered beneath the seeming calm; a star was rising over the hills of Scotland, that ere long blazed a signal beacon from clan to clan, and roused an energy which, for a time, effectually subdued the authority of English rule.

William Wallace, a name ever cherished by Scotia's sons—her justly prized hero—first stood forward in the month of May, A. D. 1297, as the liberator of his distracted country from the thralldom of English rule; and having by a masterly exploit obtained possession of the

seat of government at Scone, chieftains of note and distinguished rank flocked to the uplifted banner of freedom and independence. Ormesby, the discomfited lieutenant, with difficulty saved his life by flight, and abandoning to their chance a vast amount of booty and prisoners, hastened with all despatch to communicate the disastrous tidings to the too secure Earl of Surrey.

At this time the king was preparing to embark for Flanders, but secure in the skill and discretion of his general, he made no alteration in his plans, receiving the intelligence with a calmness apparently akin to apathy ; but left the suppression of the revolt to the ability and judgment of his trusty friend De Warrenne.

The energies of that nobleman were again aroused to vigorous action, and hastily assembling all the disposable military force of the kingdom to the north of the Trent, he a second time pushed onward under the expectation of reaping fresh glories on the fated plains of Scotland. His first act, as soon as the troops could be collected, was to despatch in advance Sir Henry Percy and Sir Robert Clifford, at the head of an army of forty thousand foot and three hundred horse. The policy of this prompt measure was immediately apparent. The insurgents, numbering a nearly equal force, were found

in the occupation of a strong position in the neighbourhood of Irvine in Ayrshire. Disorganisation, however, reigned in their ranks, and confusion in their councils. No acknowledged leader was as yet there to controul the irregular assembly that had flocked to the insurgent camp, and although Wallace had raised the standard of freedom, petty jealousies and cabals prevented his recognition among them as their authorised champion in the inevitable struggle. The natural consequence ensued; dispirited, discontented, and dismayed, the chief associates of the luckless Wallace at once withdrew themselves from his alliance, and subserviently renewed their submission to the authority of Edward, leaving but one baron and a still numerous though undisciplined force with the disgusted chieftain, who immediately withdrew with them to the north. Had the English now pursued the obvious advantage at their disposal, Scotland would again have been a subject land without the need of a blow; but for the space of two or three months, with a want of foresight far from commendable, the government neglected all further attempt to suppress the insurrection, busying itself rather with petty quarrels and disputes of precedency, without bestowing a thought upon the gathering strength of the rekindled flame of patriotism

that still blazed amid the Highlands. During this interval it appears that De Warrenne resigned his post as governor of the realm of Scotland, retaining, however, the command in chief of the armies. The King appointed as his successor in the government one Bryan Fitzalan, a distant connection of the Earl of Surrey.

In the meanwhile a fresh gathering of bold and independent spirits rallied round the still free banner of Wallace; the genius of freedom, though bruised, was not broken; the hearts of many whose hands were fettered by vows and pledges to the Southron, went with the patriotic band, and, profiting by the experience of recent failure, to select a recognised leader and champion of their cause, the Hero of Scotland at length stepped forth at the head of a prodigious though undisciplined host, to renew, with better prospect of success, the arduous struggle for his country's independence.

The strongholds of Brechin, Forfar, and Montrose, yielded to the impetuosity of the patriotic band; and, like an avalanche accumulating in its course, Wallace, leaving a strong force to invest Dundee, with a rapidity emulating that of his great antagonist, advanced at the head of forty thousand foot and one hundred and eighty

horse upon Stirling, where a considerable garrison of English troops then lay. By the promptitude of this movement he anticipated the English general, and succeeded in taking up a very strong and advantageous position in front of the Castle, before the main body of the Southron army, with De Warrenne at its head, could reach the place. Wallace posted his men on the banks of the Forth, partly concealing them behind the neighbouring high grounds ; and scarcely had he done so when the English troops appeared on the opposite side of the river, consisting, it is said, of one thousand horse and fifty thousand foot.

The sagacity of De Warrenne immediately detected the incalculable superiority of the enemy's position, and he prudently resolved to offer terms before he ventured to risk an engagement. His caution, however, was overruled by the haughty tone of defiance with which Wallace received his flag of truce, and by the impatience of the English troops to chastise the bold daring of their intrepid challenger. "Return," exclaimed Wallace, "and tell your masters that we do not come here to treat, but to assert our rights, and to set Scotland free ; let them advance, they will find us prepared." Still De Warrenne hesitated ; and during that night no movement was made

on either part. The reluctance of the English commander to risk an encounter could not arise from any apprehension of an inequality of numbers, for in that respect the advantage was obviously on his side; besides, the skill and courage of De Warrenne were too securely established for that; but the discrimination of the experienced general at once discerned that, to press to the attack of a reckless foe burning to resent prior defeat, and posted to such singular advantage as were the troops of Wallace, was to rush upon inevitable defeat or destruction, and the result too plainly proved the correctness of his judgment. The matter was deliberated for some hours, when the impetuosity of the men, and the taunts of Hugh de Cressingham, who loudly protested against the wasteful expenditure of the king's money in keeping up an army unless it were to fight, at length succeeded in overruling the better judgment of the commander, and the attack was determined upon.

It should be borne in mind, that the Forth intervened between the English army and their friends in the garrison which they had advanced to relieve,—the forces of Wallace further interposing between the Castle and the adjacent bank of the river. The only means of crossing the stream was by a narrow wooden bridge, of

authority within Scottish ground was at an end, and English forces themselves effectually driven beyond the border. Elated by a brilliant series of triumphs, Wallace carried his incursions far within the English pale; and the northern counties were fated to experience the weight of his vengeful retaliation.

These fatal reverses, however, did not diminish the confidence reposed in the Earl of Surrey by his royal master. Edward, during the active period referred to, was still in Flanders, where tidings of the total change in the posture of affairs in Scotland reached him; and acting with that promptitude and decision for which he was distinguished, he immediately addressed letters to all the Earls and Barons of England, requiring them to effect a general muster of the whole military force of the kingdom at York, by the 14th of the ensuing January, over which John de Warrenne was again deputed to be commander-in-chief—a sufficient proof that he continued to retain the esteem of the king. In this way a formidable army was assembled, consisting of not less than one hundred thousand foot and four thousand horse; who, under the gallant conduct of the Earl of Surrey, again advanced upon the Scottish border. The tables were once more turned; and the lately victorious Scots fled

before the mighty host arrayed against them. The army reached Berwick without striking a blow, and was preparing to enter upon the Scottish territory, when orders reached De Warrenne from Edward, commanding him to suspend all further advance until the King himself should arrive to place himself at its head.

From this period, the name of John de Warrenne occurs no longer in the prominent position it had hitherto occupied, and history is silent with respect to his further career. There seems no reason to doubt that in the calm seclusion of his Castle of Acre, where he lived to a venerable old age, he continued to be honoured with the esteem and confidence of his royal master; for in the many harassing and in some cases formidable differences, that subsequently took place between Edward and his Barons, the name of the Earl of Surrey does not once occur; which, from the powerful extent of his influence, would surely have been the case had he taken any active part in those dissensions.

The particulars of the domestic career of this distinguished member of the De Warrenne family are extremely vague and uncertain. It appears that he had one son, who married and died within the lifetime of his father,—leaving issue also one son, who at an early age

succeeded to the titles and estates on the decease of his grandfather, John Plantagenet. The Priory of Acre failed not to experience the munificence of the brave old Earl, and the Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen at Thetford was indebted for its foundation to the same liberal benefactor.

A remarkable contrast is presented to us in the character of John, grandson of the above, and the seventh and last Earl de Warrenne and Surrey: weak, mercenary, and dissolute, he seems by his folly and vices to have done much to degrade the name and to deteriorate the patrimony which he so unworthily held. Insensible to the real value of the influence which the high and commanding character, and the noble qualities of his grandfather had obtained for his family, he availed himself of it only to foster his pride or to gratify his desires. Owing to the influential position which the De Warrennes occupied in the court of the First Edward, this degenerate Earl succeeded in obtaining the hand of Joan de Barr, a granddaughter of the above king, in marriage, an event which in itself was well calculated to cement and strengthen that influence which the gallant old Earl had justly obtained in the councils of his sovereign; and which was further exemplified in the appointment of the

newly-married John to the responsible post of Deputy Constable of the Realm.

A very few years elapsed before the sordid and malevolent passions of the last De Warrenne began to manifest themselves. Edward the First died on his expedition against Scotland within less than two years of the marriage of Earl de Warrenne, and the throne of England devolved upon the son of the deceased monarch, the first Prince of Wales, one in all noble qualities the very reverse of his father. De Warrenne was not slow to detect the prevailing foibles in the character of the second Edward—weakness and cupidity, and in due time he diverted this disposition to the furtherance of his own iniquitous views. In the early part of this reign, indeed, he had united with the other leading Barons in opposing the infatuous predilection of the king for Piers Gaveston, to whom De Warrenne owed a peculiar grudge for his having worsted him in a tournament; but no sooner was Gaveston disposed of, than the wily Earl, with considerable subtlety, sought to gain the favourable disposition of the king to the promotion of his own base views.

Wearied of the society of his amiable Countess, whose only reproach was that she was childless, De Warrenne

sought for some pretext upon which he might sue for a divorce. The circumstance of his wife's close connexion with the blood-royal, rendered this a task of no small tact and delicacy; but a timely display of loyal devotion to his master's interests sufficed to effect that which a direct appeal might have failed to accomplish. To this end, therefore, in the early part of the year 1316, affecting to experience extraordinary zeal in the service of his sovereign, whose interests he pretended were deserving of every sacrifice, he being at that time put to severe expenses for prosecuting the war in Ireland, De Warrenne made a free gift to Edward of a great part of his patrimonial estates, inclusive of his Castle and manor of Acre. The ruse succeeded; Edward, charmed by the apparently disinterested sacrifice of his opulent baron, retained possession of the munificent gift for little more than a year, when he regranted it to the undeserving Earl, accompanied by his full sanction to the divorce, which had been opportunely introduced to his notice. De Warenne, separated from his Countess Joan, immediately contracted a second marriage with Isabella de Houland; although this new alliance proved no less unfortunate than the first, if issue had been the desire which prompted him to seek the divorce: Isabella died childless.

The wanton indifference to the integrity of his patrimonial estates which De Warrenne had evinced by his gratuitous surrender of them to the king, was again displayed at the earliest opportunity. Scarcely had he been replaced in their possession than he began to give further proof of the little store he set by them, in seeking about for a purchaser for these despised possessions; nor was he long detained in the search, for he found a willing purchaser in the person of the Earl of Pembroke, who within a year or two again passed them to the Earl of Athol; and thus, for the space of nearly ten years, they were entirely alienated from the family of De Warrenne.

However, in the first year of Edward III. the capricious Earl again repurchased of the Earl of Athol, the castle, manor, and estates he had previously sold, and one would hope that the return of better feelings might have prompted him to desire their repossession. The real motive, unhappily, was not long a matter of question. In the year 1336, we once more find this vacillating and mercenary noble making a second grant of his valuable possessions to the reigning sovereign! It does not appear to what particular end this ostentatious gift was now directed, but doubtless the subtle Earl antici-

perty as disgraced the career of his predecessor, he adopted the precaution of entailing the castle and manor of Acre upon his heirs-male only. He married Eleanor daughter of Henry, Earl of Lancaster, and widow of Henry Lord Beaumont, by whom he had one son; and after a peaceful enjoyment of his princely possessions during a period of nearly twenty-eight years, died A. D. 1375.

Richard, son of the above, now succeeded to the titles and estates, and had the fortune to attract the notice and regard of the youthful Richard II. immediately upon his accession to the throne. In the month of August, 1377, we find the Earl of Arundel and Surrey leading the armies of the recently crowned monarch, and evincing something of the spirit and success of his great progenitor, the sixth Earl De Warrenne. A combined armament of French and Spanish, who had landed in great force in the Isle of Wight, devastating it and the adjoining coast of Hampshire, were effectually repulsed with great loss by the Earl of Arundel at the head of the English troops, in the vicinity of Southampton; and further important services were rendered by this nobleman in the subsequent incursions made by the enemy on the coasts of Sussex and Kent. In the following year

(1378), a squadron was detached under the joint command of the Earls of Arundel and Salisbury, with the view of taking possession of the port and town of Cherbourg on the coast of Normandy, which had been just ceded to England by the King of Navarre, then occupied in a war with the French King, and who by this cession hoped to obtain the valuable aid of the English in his struggle. On its passage, the squadron encountered a Spanish fleet, and sustained considerable loss, but at length its destination was reached and Cherbourg effectually secured: thus depriving France of an important naval arsenal, and affording to the English another key of entrance to that kingdom.

It would be thought that faithful and efficient services were at all times a sufficient claim upon the confidence and esteem of the sovereign, and not easily to be forgotten. For a time, the Earl of Arundel appears to have retained the favourable countenance of the King; but ere long he was doomed to learn, by melancholy experience, the value of the inspired Psalmist's humiliating caution — "Put not your trust in princes."

The Earl of Arundel had for many years enjoyed the friendship and confidence of the Duke of Gloucester, uncle to the King; and in the vigorous measures adopted

by the Duke to displace from their ascendancy in the councils of Richard, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and Robert de Vere, Marquis of Dublin, and in the subsequent commission chosen by consent of both houses of parliament to reform the state of the nation, at the head of which Gloucester was placed,—the Duke found willing and able coadjutors in the Earls of Arundel and Nottingham. The energy and success with which Gloucester carried his measures into operation, for a time effectually cowed the spirit of the faint-hearted King, who quailed before the energies of his imperious uncle. But hatred rankled at the monarch's heart, and he only bided his time for a signal and complete revenge. That which he had not the moral or physical courage to effect by force, he determined to accomplish by treachery and stratagem. Simulating acquiescence in the arrangements of Gloucester and his party (among the most prominent of whom were the Earls of Arundel, Warwick, and Nottingham, although the latter, who was actually married to the daughter of Arundel, at a subsequent period insidiously withdrew from the connection of his friends, and became one of the most diligent parasites of the King,) Richard suffered some ten years to elapse without betraying his resentment in any prominent manner.

At length, within twelve months after his marriage with Isabella, daughter of Charles VI. of France—an alliance which he knew to be as unwelcome to Gloucester and his friends, as it was generally unpopular throughout the country—his treacherous design was carried into effect with consummate skill.

His first victim was the Earl of Warwick, for whom he feigned an unusual degree of newly-awakened regard. Having invited him to a banquet, he received and entertained him with marked blandness and hospitality; but before the conclusion of the interview the luckless Earl found himself placed under close arrest on a charge of treason.

Within two days of this stroke, and before it could be greatly noised abroad, the wily King succeeded in prevailing upon Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, to bring his brother, the Earl, to the royal presence for a *friendly* conference. The result also in this case was precisely the same, and the Arundels fell into the snare.

There now remained but one more victim for this treacherous sacrifice, and he the most important of all. Hastening, with a gay and gallant company, to his uncle's castle of Pleshy, in Essex, where Gloucester was sojourning with his family, the unsuspecting Duke

hurried to the entrance, to welcome his royal relative with all due honour. Richard saluted him in a sprightly and buoyant tone, and hurrying onward, feigned great eagerness to pay his respects to the Duchess, whom he detained in friendly conversation, while the Earl Marshal suddenly seizing the astonished Duke, hurried him with incredible speed to the Thames, secured him on ship-board, and had him conveyed to the strong-hold of the castle of Calais, where, shortly after, he was ingeniously murdered, although his death was publicly attributed to natural causes, and his body, which certainly betrayed no traces of violence, restored to his afflicted widow.

But the *coup-d'état* of Richard was not yet complete. Pushing on with extraordinary speed to the Castle of Nottingham, where his uncles Lancaster and York, and his cousin Henry of Bolingbroke, who were in a great degree involved in the measures and opinions of the Duke of Gloucester, then lay, he surprised them into annexing their seals to a document which charged their unfortunate friends, the Duke of Gloucester, the Earls of Arundel and Warwick, of treason; and armed with this additional authority, he hastened back to London to put the closing scene to the tragedy.

On the 17th of September, Thomas Arundel, the

primate, was publicly impeached of high treason ; but, apprehensive of the effect which his well-known eloquence might produce upon the assembled Peers and Commons, Richard, affecting to exercise unwonted clemency in the case of this distinguished ecclesiastic, contrived at once to obtain a sentence against him of banishment for life. This was accordingly acted upon, although, after all, the sentence was destined to be of brief duration. Within rather more than a year after it was pronounced, Thomas Arundel returned from exile, in company with the wily Bolingbroke ; upon whose accession to the throne, on the deposition of Richard, the Archbishop was fully re-instated in the see of Canterbury. In this capacity, which he continued to fill until his death, he acquired an infamous notoriety, for the rigour of his measures against the Lollards ; against which class of early Reformers he directed the most severe penalties. The first victim to this persecution at the hands of Arundel was William Sawtre, rector of Lynn Regis, who after sundry conferences with the primate, was solemnly deprived of his priestly office by the Archbishop, excommunicated, and delivered over to the secular power, by whom he was burnt in Smithfield—a fearful precedent, the first fruits of a bloody harvest in the same arena.

This martyr was speedily followed by others, among whom was the amiable and talented Lord Cobham. The particulars of their respective conferences and discussions with Arundel, are recorded in Foxe's Acts and Monuments. Archbishop Arundel, though a man of considerable learning and ability, was withal an inflexible bigot and stickler for the supremacy of prelatical authority. To his example and influence many deviations from the primitive standards of faith and doctrine in the church owe their promulgation, if not their origin. He particularly enjoined the worship of the Virgin, and encouraged many superstitions, worthy only of the darkest ages; and it is worthy of especial notice that it was about this period that the cup, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, was gradually withheld from the laity, although so cautiously was this *innovation* introduced, that the clergy were instructed to begin the practice only in small obscure village churches.

But to return. On the very day following the sentence passed on the Primate, Richard Earl of Arundel was placed at the bar of the House of Lords, and his trial proceeded with unwarrantable rapidity. The unfortunate Earl stoutly protested his innocence, and offered to prove it by the then frequent expedient, in such cases, of

ordeal by battle. Failing to obtain this concession, he demanded a fair and open trial by jury; this also was denied him, for his destruction was resolved upon; and, as a last resource, he pleaded a general and particular pardon, on account of services rendered many years before. In vain did he claim an impartial hearing; sentence was passed with very little ceremony. On the following day his execution accordingly took place on Tower Hill; at which, to his additional agony, his own son-in-law, Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham, assisted, and performed the unfilial office of binding up the victim's eyes for sacrifice: it is even said by some that he struck the blow which severed the head from the trunk of the hapless Earl of Arundel.

The vindictive spirit of the King towards the family of his noble victim did not terminate with this tragic issue. The late unfortunate Earl had, in early life, espoused Elizabeth, daughter of William Bohun, Earl of Northampton, by whom he left issue a son and a daughter. Upon the untimely decease of his father, this son, Thomas, by virtue of the entail, should have succeeded to the enjoyment of the titles and estates; but the King, availing himself of the pretext of treason on the part of the father, determined to carry his resentment

to the utmost, and without hesitation alienated the possessions of the Earldom of Arundel and Surrey to others; bestowing the castle and manor of Acre upon that pious individual, the Earl of Nottingham, whom he at the same time raised to the dignity of Duke of Norfolk, and causing an act to be passed, by which the issue-male of all those persons who had been condemned were for ever declared incapable of sitting in parliament, or holding office in council.

Thus matters continued, until the deposition of Richard, and the accession of Bolingbroke as Henry IV., when one of the first acts of the latter was to reverse the attainder against the unoffending son of his unfortunate friend and ally the Earl of Arundel, to rescind the heartless and obnoxious act which excluded him from office, and to reinstate him fully in the possession of the ancient family titles and estates. After this, he continued to enjoy the uninterrupted esteem of his sovereign and his successor. The latter he accompanied into France, and took part in the brilliant glories of the memorable field of Azincourt, and in those other encounters which tended so greatly to elevate the military fame of England upon the Continent. He had married, in early life, Beatrice, an illegitimate daughter of the

King of Portugal, but left no issue at his decease, which occurred in 1416.

It will be needless to trace the history of these noble families any further. Enough has been said to illustrate the character of those powerful and haughty feudal chiefs, with whose memory the grey remnants of the Castle of Acre must ever be associated. All that we have aimed at in the foregoing sketch has been to convey some impression, however slight, of the position in society and bearing of those individuals who, in a remote age of chivalry, occupied its stately halls, and crowded its defences with all the splendour and circumstance of a military stronghold. At the epoch where our sketch breaks off, the days of chivalry were fast passing away, and the immense baronial power and influence which had formerly been matter of jealous suspicion, if not alarm, to the Sovereign, was fast losing its weight and importance in the regal councils. The stern and haughty Barons of the two last centuries began to merge into the no less dignified and infinitely more high-minded and generous class which constitute the Nobility of England.

Before we dismiss this portion of our subject, it may not be uninteresting to take a rapid glance at the general character, habits, and customs of those ancient

Barons who occupy so prominent a station in the early annals of our history in connexion with, and consequent upon, the Conquest.

They were, as we have already seen, essentially a chivalrous race, in so much, at least, as the term implies considerable military skill, personal courage, hardihood, and independent spirit; in the higher qualities of chivalrous bearing, they were too frequently deficient. The success to which they attained in their military operations was unsurpassed by any class of people of the time, and victory usually crowned their operations to whatever quarter they might be directed. In the direction of their exploits, they were not particularly scrupulous with respect to the moral rights and privileges of others; by the sword they obtained possession of their domains, and by the sword they retained it. A stern, uncompromising, grinding system was introduced by the Normans, which enabled them to crush, with iron hand, that spirit of resistance which a more equitable policy might have rendered it difficult to them to subdue. Such, in brief, was the general character of the feudal system.

The establishments maintained by these haughty chiefs, were of a piece with the oppressive magnificence

which characterised their general demeanour. The castles, with their immediate dependencies, were crowded with retainers who, apart from ceremonies of state, were wont to be at the disposal of their liege masters upon the most ordinary occasions. In travelling, it was no unusual thing for a Baron to be attended by as many as a thousand horse, besides a retinue on foot; while in time of war, in addition to the pecuniary resources they could bring to the assistance of the sovereign, their trains, fully mounted and equipped, formed little armies in themselves. Whatever share a love of pomp and parade might have in such displays, there can be no doubt that the extreme insecurity of the country, and the precarious tenure by which the Normans during a long period held their newly acquired possessions, suggested the necessity of these precautions; which rendered them at once formidable to the predatory bands of outlawed Saxons, and at length objects of jealous suspicion to the sovereign, who, unable to dispense with their aid, could not control their independence. The frequent collisions between the Barons of the realm and their acknowledged head, in which the former successfully maintained their independence, are well-known matters of history.

A similar profuse expenditure prevailed in the domestic arrangements of the baronial strongholds; but in most instances, the means were inadequate to the intention. The modern accessories of luxurious ease and refinement were little dreamt of by the rude dwellers of an iron age; stately and grand as we know their halls to have been, the particulars of their internal arrangement were little in accordance with the character. Straw supplied the place of beds, rushes rudely strown served for carpets,—the regal palace boasted nothing better for the general mass of its inmates. Splendid garments, rich armour, massy cups of gold and silver, and priceless jewels of various kinds were not uncommon among them; but of the innumerable appliances of domestic convenience and elegance, which long custom has since rendered indispensable to the humblest cotter in the land, they were utterly ignorant or careless. Huge oaken tables groaned beneath the prodigality of substantial cheer, but fingers alone were employed in tearing the morsel from the joint; and the wine-cup circulated from mouth to mouth, without regard to rank or age. The baronial tables, however, were provided with the rarest luxuries that the age could produce and money procure; and no pains were spared to render their enter-

tainments sumptuous and *recherchés*. The cookery was congenial to the prevailing tastes; and although many of the dishes would doubtless horrify a *gastronome* of the nineteenth century, they possessed peculiar *agrémens* for the epicures of that day. Among the most esteemed of their dainties must be mentioned the crane and the peacock, the latter of which was frequently sent to table in its gorgeous plumage; while certain other dishes, known by the not very euphonous names of Diligrout, Kasurnpie, and Maumpigirun, were especial favourites. Indeed, so much importance was attached to the correct preparation of certain condiments, that Blount, in his "Ancient Tenures," records the fact of estates being held on this express condition. Wines of coarse and powerful quality, with ale and cider, constituted the usual beverages.

With all this incitement to sensual indulgence, the Normans were a temperate race, and their banquets were regulated rather for display than luxury. Their hours were early, and a triplet proverbial amongst them acquaints us with the fact:—

Lever à cinq,—diner à neuf,
Souper à cinq,—coucher à neuf,
Fait vivre d'ans nonnante et neufs.

(THUS MODERNIZED.)

To rise at five,—to dine at nine,

To sup at five,—to bed at nine,

Makes a man live to ninety-nine ;

a system which might not unadvantageously be practised at the present day. In short, their daily habits were strictly regulated, so as to maintain unimpaired that vigour of body and strength of constitution so essential to the chivalrous character they professed. To this all other considerations were made subservient ; and if boisterous revelry sometimes prevailed, effeminacy and enervating indulgence were alike scouted and shunned.

The literary capabilities of the Barons of old were such as might be expected from an age when might was regarded rather than right, and the sword served as the most usual pen. Few, very few, could read, still less could write, for such acquirements were looked upon as the province of "poor beggarly clerks;" even seals were not employed until a late period, and the usual mode adopted by the Baron to confirm a grant or sanction a deed, was to *bite* the wax, leaving the impress of his teeth on the pliant mastic as the only proof of his approbation.

Such were some of the characteristics of a class of men who filled no inconspicuous position in the early annals of our history, and who were destined to be the instruments of great and decisive changes in its social and moral features. Highly as, in an age of enlightened intellectuality, we may be disposed to censure the views, habits, and practices of these people, let us not withhold from them the meed of bold and chivalrous bearing; and if, perchance, at any time we are disposed to denounce them as little better than robbers, let the opprobrious epithet be cancelled in the remembrance of RUNNYMEDE.



Etched by H.Nimham from a Drawing by C.Wright.

GATEWAY TO THE OUTER BALLION.

THE CASTLE.

HISTORICAL NOTICES.



N opinion has obtained to some extent among the curious in such researches, (based upon an ambiguous expression in Blomefield,) that this venerable stronghold of feudal grandeur may be referred to a Roman origin,—that traces of their work may be detected in the existing remains. The inference does not appear sufficiently supported by evidence to be deemed conclusive, and a careful examination of the site does not, we imagine, confirm the supposition.

That a small Roman station existed in the immediate vicinity, if not on the actual site, of the castle, is probable from its direct proximity to a road or *via* familiarly known as the Peddar's Way, running in a straight line from hence to the coast, and from the natural features of the surrounding country presenting a locality favourable

to such a purpose ;—but, undoubtedly, there is at present no evidence of a *castrum* or permanent station, such as may indubitably be traced at Caister, Burgh Castle, and other places in Norfolk and the adjoining counties, having occupied this particular site. The simple fact of a few coins and other articles of Roman handicraft having occasionally, though rarely, been brought to light within the limits of the parish, whilst they indicate its proximity, does not by any means authorise us to appropriate the precise place of Roman sojournment. The remaining walls, too, massive and ponderous as they are, do not present decisive traces of that distinctive feature which characterises Roman work of this description, and thus the whereabouts of the ancient *castrum*, if any existed, must at best be conjectural, and that so vaguely as to baffle the scrutiny of the most diligent examiner. Enough will be found to gratify the admiration of the spectator if we assign to these venerable remains a more recent origin, and ascribe them to the wealth and enterprise of the first De Warrenne.

The materials whereon to graft an historical notice of the once magnificent family-seat of the proud Earls De Warrenne and Surrey are so extremely scanty, that our sketch must of necessity be brief. Indeed much of that

which relates to the castle itself has already been anticipated in the preceding section, and little remains for us to trace but the fluctuations of its fortune in the hands of its several possessors from the period of its foundation to the present time. These we have endeavoured to embody in a tabular summary, which will be given presently ; and, in the mean while, we may devote a few minutes to a consideration of the peculiar character of the military architecture of the period, of which our now dilapidated stronghold was once an admirable type.

The military structures of the Norman era are of a character totally distinct from the huge fortified residences which predominated generally at a later period. The peculiar position of our Norman invaders, in the midst of a people still smarting under the wound of recent conquest, and as yet but imperfectly subdued, rendered it imperative upon the companions of the Conqueror to consult security in the construction of their strongholds before the refinements of convenience or luxury ; and thus we find in the castles of the twelfth century that the attention of the founder has been directed solely to this end. The principles upon which this desirable security was to be attained were of a nature totally opposite to those which are adopted with

baron or commandant. In form the Anglo-Norman keeps are varied, and not always regular; but in those of the larger size rectangular plans are the most common, and of the smaller class many are circular.

“The greater keeps are often enormous masses of building. That of the Tower of London is a parallelogram of one hundred and sixteen feet by ninety-six, and sixty-nine high. Rochester occupies a square of about seventy feet, and rises to the immense height of one hundred and four. Dover, Colchester, Castle Rising, Kenilworth, Richmond, Bamborough, and others too numerous to be separately distinguished, are of the same class and on a similar plan. Their vast surfaces are relieved by shallow buttresses; and in some instances, as at Norwich, by ornamental arches*.”

Such was the general character of those massy feudal strongholds, of which the Castle of Acre has been in its time a noble example; but unfortunately there remains little more than an outline to indicate its arrangement and proportions. Time and violence alone have not been the sole agents in this entire dilapidation; and there is every probability that after its abandonment as a family residence, it was gradually dismantled and

* Pict. Hist. of England, Vol. I.

levelled with the ground by the successive proprietors of the manor. To the antiquary this must ever be matter of regret; for to judge from the extent of the existing skeleton, if we may so term it, the preservation of this fortress would have furnished posterity with an admirable specimen of this class of buildings in a part of the country where such structures are extremely rare.

For upwards of two centuries, however, the Castle of Acre was doubtless maintained in all its integrity, and so long as it was held by the De Warrennes, with the exception perhaps of the last Earl, it was occupied by them as a family residence, and therefore kept perfect in all its appointments. Admirably calculated for purposes of defence, and studiously constructed to resist with success such military operations as might be brought to bear against it, this stronghold does not appear ever to have had its capabilities in that way tested. Its career was uniformly one of peace; no siege, no investment, no assault is on record, in which the fortress bore a part. There is indeed a very vague tradition still extant in the neighbourhood, of a certain battering which its old walls sustained from the Parliamentary forces during the Great Rebellion; and a hill, popularly known as Winchester Hill, commanding the area from some little distance, is

pointed out as the station whereon were planted the cannon directed against the castle; and it is further alleged that balls have been dug up within the areas of the ballium and the keep. But the whole rests on very insufficient authority, and our opinion is that, at the period referred to, the castle itself—by which we understand the keep and its appendages—had long ceased to exist; there being little more remaining then than at this time. If the rumour has any foundation in fact whatever, it may have originated in the circumstance of the site having been temporarily occupied by a detachment of the royalist troops, as a redoubt or encampment, from which it was necessary to dislodge them by a cannonade; but we cannot find any authentic traces of such an event, and that there ever was anything in the shape of a regular siege of the locality we are disposed unhesitatingly to question, for the reasons given above.

Whilst, however, the Castle of Acre retained its original character of an Anglo-Norman stronghold, there is assuredly no evidence to show that it was ever hostilely approached, and its formidable ramparts, towers, battlements and outworks frowned stern defiance in the midst of a serene and quiet landscape, undisturbed by the presence of a single foe. But if the din and turmoil of

warfare were wanting, the ancient seat of the De Warrennes was not deficient in those other bustling accessories which we are wont to associate with the idea of a castle. From the rank, wealth, and influence of this family, we may well conceive it to have often been the arena of the splendid hospitalities for which the baronial residences of England were usually distinguished. Retainers crowded within the walls; men-at-arms thronged the ramparts; noble knights and squires filled the spacious halls; courtly dames and high-born beauties graced the ample dais; tilts and tournaments allured with their gorgeous pageantry; mimes, glee-men, and minnesingers added fresh impulse to the festal hour; and all the pomp and circumstance which a proud Baron of the olden time could so readily command were here displayed in all their splendour. On one occasion in particular, referred to in another place*, all these attractions were concentrated, as it were, to do honour to the presence of one of England's proudest and most chivalrous sovereigns, and still tradition retains some faint memory of the glories of the royal visit. Who can pause unmoved amid the void and grass-grown area of the castle keep, and suffer busy fancy to retrace the

* Vide, ante, p. 53.

splendours of the past, to which its rude and shattered walls were tongueless witnesses? We envy not the man.

It is not easy to determine at what particular period the castle began to decline from its pristine integrity and importance; but it seems probable that its decline may be dated from the time of the last Earl De Warrenne. We have elsewhere noticed the extraordinary course adopted by that Baron in reference to this domain, and it is natural to conclude that the indifference manifested by him towards the possession of the property was accompanied by an entire neglect of it. During his lifetime it passed into the hands of four several proprietors, and ultimately repassed into his own, not apparently from any particular desire to that effect on his part, but through the direct interference of the sovereign. Of course, pending these successive changes it could not have been permanently occupied as a family residence, and once fairly abandoned in that capacity, its integrity as a military stronghold was no longer an object of interest. Upon coming into the possession of the Earls of Arundel, its fate was sealed. The superior beauty and advantages of their princely Castle of Arundel, caused them at once to decide in favour of the latter, and the Castle of Acre was no longer the seat of

baronial splendour and hospitality. It is probable, then, that the work of dilapidation proceeded from this time ; repair being utterly neglected, the lapse of years produced the usual consequence, and successive proprietors, desirous of turning the material to the best advantage, or of adapting it to other purposes, gradually commenced the work of demolition until every trace of the habitable portion of the structure was entirely removed. It is impossible to account for the total disappearance of the keep and domestic buildings upon any other supposition than this ; for the immense solidity with which such edifices were constructed, would fairly bid defiance to the united efforts of time and violence in their destruction, unless a deliberate effort were made to that end. Nothing, however, now remains except a few fragments of external wall, and such peculiar features of the site as could not be obliterated without the expenditure of considerable labour. The illustration at the head of the ensuing section will serve to convey some idea of the picturesque appearances of these fragments. It represents a portion of the area of the keep viewed from the summit of the inner fosse, while a portion of the rampart and fosse of the inner ballium are perceptible to the left, some of the modern dwellings, with the tower of the church, being

visible in the distance; the moonlight effect which the artist has so happily caught, presents the most favourable point of view in which the remains can be contemplated, and may be repeatedly viewed in the clear, bright, still, and balmy nights of autumn. The detail of existing remains, however, properly belongs to another section, and we shall here bring our slight historical notice to a close by an enumeration of the several Lords of the Castle and Manor of Acre into whose possession it has successively passed, from the period of the Conquest to the present time.

TABULAR LIST

OF THE SUCCESSIVE PROPRIETORS OF THE CASTLE OF ACRE, WITH THE LORDSHIPS
THEREUNTO ANNEXED.

- 1st. William, Earl de Guarenne in Normandy, and of Surrey in England.—(By grant from the Conqueror.)
- 2d. William, son of the above, second Earl de Warrenne.
- 3d. William, his son, third Earl de Warenne.
- 4th. Hamlyn Plantagenet, fourth Earl de Warenne.—(By intermarriage with the daughter of the above.)
- 5th. William, his son, fifth Earl de Warrenne, &c.
- 6th. John Plantagenet, sixth Earl de Warrenne.
- 7th. John, grandson of the above, seventh and last Earl de Warrenne and Surrey.

- 8th. Adomar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke.—(By purchase from the aforementioned Earl.)
- 9th. David, Earl of Athol.—(By purchase of the Earl of Pembroke.)
- 10th. John, seventh Earl de Warrenne.—(By repurchase of the Earl of Athol.)
- 11th. Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, nephew of the last-named Earl.—(By him entailed to his heirs male.)
- 12th. Richard, son of the above.
- 13th. Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.—(By grant from Richard II. on the attainder of the last-named Earl of Arundel.)
- 14th. Thomas, son of the aforesaid Richard Fitzalan.—(By restitution from Henry IV.)
- 15th. John Fitzalan, Lord Maltravers, cousin to the above-named Earl.

In the person of John Fitzalan, Lord Maltravers, commenced the union of the distinguished families of Fitzalan and Maltravers, which subsisted among the succeeding Barons until its termination with the last of the Fitzalan family in Henry, twenty-second Earl of Arundel.

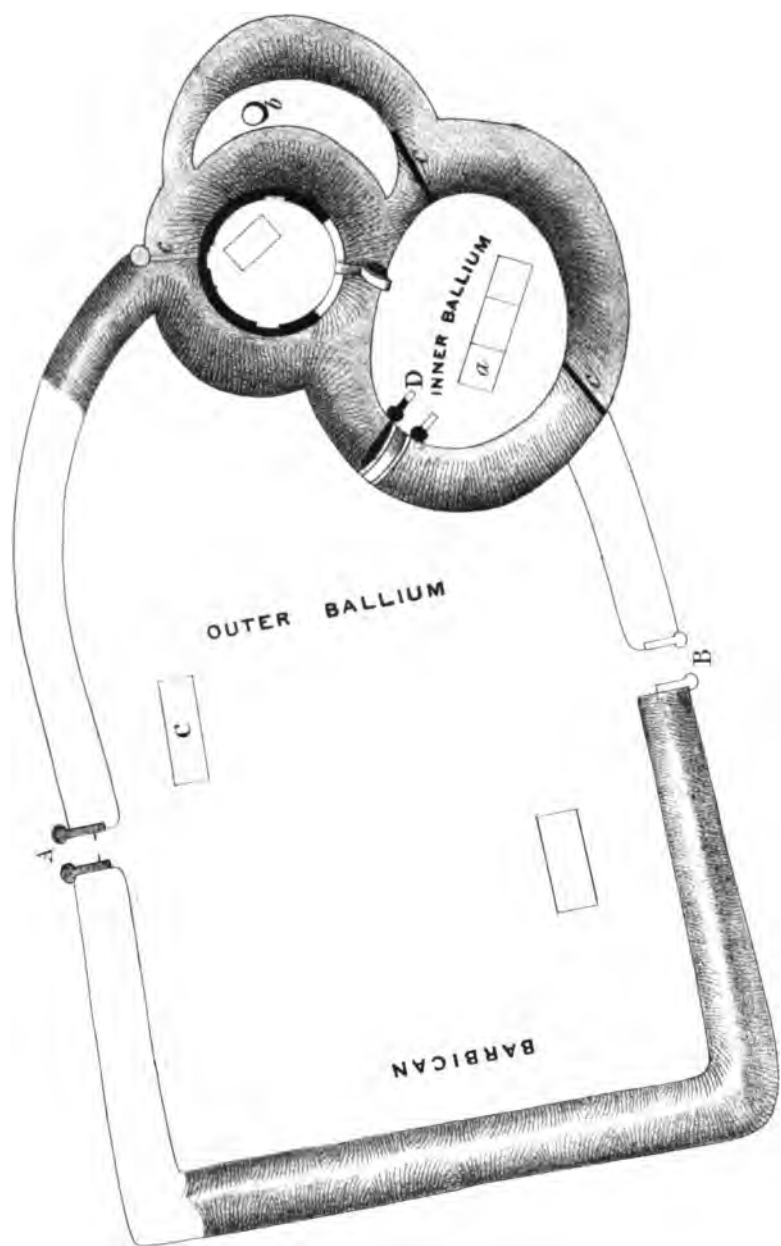


- 16th. John, his son.
- 17th. William, uncle to the last-named.
- 18th. Thomas, his son.
- 19th. William, his son.
- 20th. Henry, his son.

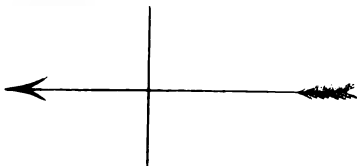
With this Earl the entail for a considerable period terminates, there being no heirs male of the said Henry Fitzalan in any branch. His titles passed to the family of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, in right of his marriage with Mary, second daughter of the said Henry.

The Castle and Lordship of Acre were sold by the same Henry Fitzalan to

- 21st. Sir Thomas Gresham.
- 22d. Thomas Cecil, Earl of Exeter.—(By purchase of Sir Thomas Gresham.)
- 23d. William Cecil, his son.
- 24th. Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice of England.—(By purchase of William Cecil.)
- 25th. Sir Robert Coke.
- 26th. Sir Edward Coke.
- 27th. Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester, who again entailed the Lordship upon his heirs male.
- 28th. Wenman Roberts Coke, Esq., of Longford in Derbyshire.
- 29th. Thomas William Coke, Earl of Leicester.
- 30th. Thomas William Coke, Earl of Leicester, son of the above, and present proprietor.



PLAN OF THE CASE, ETC.





KEEP OF CASTLEACRE.

THE CASTLE.

EXISTING REMAINS.

There the strong barbican—the moated wall,
 Proclaim the day that closed on Harold's fall.
 From yonder gate, in burnish'd mail bedight,
 The Baron led his warriors to the fight.
 Through yonder arch the bold Crusaders pour'd,
 When faithless Paynim dared the Christian sword.
 In yonder Court for tournament array'd,
 England's proud chivalry their flags display'd.



HE remains of the feudal stronghold of the De Warrennes are comprised within an area somewhat exceeding eighteen acres in extent; but so completely has the greatest portion of a pile that once rose proudly and sovereignly above the soil been

obliterated, that but little is left to indicate its pristine grandeur, except a general ground plan, and the huge circumvallation of the earthworks which no time can altogether efface. The detail of the remains must, therefore, necessarily be brief; but with the aid of our plan we shall, it is hoped, succeed in conveying some idea of the importance and former arrangement of this structure.

The area we have noticed was, it will be observed, of irregular form, surrounded throughout its entire extent, except at two points, by a deep fosse and lofty rampart of earth that still retains its sharp and precipitous outline in a remarkable degree of preservation. Advantage was taken of the natural formation of the ground that constitutes the northern bank of the Nar, which rises from the valley with a marked but gentle sweep. Upon a portion of this acclivity the outworks were thrown up, crowned by the keep on an artificial mound superadded to the natural elevation of the locality.

The only access to the approaches was through the entrance gateways, marked A, B, on the plan, by the first or northern one of which [A] we shall commence our examination of the enclosure.

This gateway still remains, at the top of the principal street of the village, of which it forms a curious, and, for England, an unusual feature. It gives the air of a small Continental town, with its *haute* and *basse* ville; and the picturesque effect produced by this lingering remnant of feudal importance may be inferred from the accompanying faithful illustration, which shows the steep descent of the street as seen through the archway of the gate. The entrance itself consists of a double portal, opening in either direction through a pointed arch, flanked by small but massy circular towers of rough flint, which was the principal material employed throughout the structure. It had originally an outer and an inner door of oak, the hinge pivots of the latter still remaining in the side walls; and between the doors was the usual portcullis, the stone groove in which it ran being yet in a perfect state of preservation. Above was doubtless a small chamber, and a contrivance for pouring down melted lead or boiling pitch upon any assailing party that might perchance win its way to the possession of the outer door; but all trace of such contrivance is now gone, the space being open to the sky. The gateway [B] at the bottom of the present street, the remains of which have only been removed within the present cen-

tury, was in every respect similar to the one we have noticed. It would seem that these gateways were not of so early a period as the main body of the castle itself, since they must have been built when the pointed style began to supersede the severe curve of the early Norman ; although there can be no doubt they were constructed on the foundations of similar approaches.

The name still retained by the street upon which we thus enter sufficiently indicates the nature of the locality. We stand within the outer ballium, and the street is popularly called Bailey Street.

A few paces to the left of the gateway, within the ballium, stood a chapel [C], of which but very faint indications now remain, part of a western gable attached to a short row of cottages, and fronting the street, being all that is left to mark the spot. Some of the old inhabitants, however, well remember the traces here to have been of a more decided character. This chapel has been called the Castle Chapel, and so far as it stood within the works attached to that structure, it is entitled to the name ; but undoubtedly it could not have been *the* chapel attached to the Castle *par excellence*, for it is not likely that an edifice erected for the private use of the family would be placed in a situation so remote from

the domestic buildings of the establishment, or in a locality so comparatively insecure as the outer ballium. The private chapel of the castle we imagine to have been immediately connected, if not within the keep itself. The chapel that existed in this place was in all probability connected with some small buildings partaking of a monastic character, and appropriated by the first De Warrenne to the use of the brethren of the Abbey of Cluny, who had accompanied him from Normandy. We are expressly informed that four members of the fraternity alluded to, with one Lanzo, as their superior, were prevailed upon by the powerful Earl to take up their residence within the precincts of his castle of Acre, where they abode under his protection, and officiated in his family as occasion required. Here they remained until the foundation of the neighbouring priory, and the progress of the works in that quarter (of which most probably they were the architects), enabled them to remove thither the nucleus of the infant establishment. The chapel we are noticing may have been appropriated to their use, and thus may be regarded as the prototype, if we may so speak, of the future conventual church. If the conjecture be correct, we cannot fail to regard the spot with additional interest.

To the right of the entrance was an extensive open space, of oblong form, now partially covered by houses, but still retaining its pristine character towards the west. This space is familiarly known as *the Barbican*, and apart from the retention of the term indicating the character of the locality, there is every reason to believe that this outwork served the purpose alluded to. If it be thought that the area thus distinguished is somewhat too extensive for the usual character of a barbican, it is answered that there does not appear to have been any definite dimensions for the nature of this defence. A barbican is defined to be "a kind of watch-tower; also *an advanced work* before the gate of a castle or fortified town, or *any outwork* at a short distance from the main works."* Now this description admits of considerable latitude, and answers in many respects to the character of the outwork under notice. It is really in advance of "the main works" of the castle, the principal entrance gate to which [D] fronted the west, and, doubtless, in case of assault would have proved a formidable impediment to the approach of hostile troops, whilst at the same time it would serve as a secure enclosure for the sheep and other stock required for the use of the

* Vide Glossary of Architecture, *ad verb.*

beleagured fortress. Let any one examine the huge rampart of earth which, with its external fosse, here exists in an excellent state of preservation, particularly towards the south-west, and he will at once perceive how ingeniously it was contrived for security against the greater part of the resources that could be brought to bear against it in those olden times, and how great must have been the labour bestowed on its construction. The remains of a barbican of this character are of extremely rare occurrence in this country, the greater part of the existing defences so distinguished being little more than small embattled spaces in advance of the main gate, as at the Monk Bar at York, and at Warwick Castle. The direction and extent of our barbican will be best inferred on reference to the plan.

Passing down the steep declivity of the street of the modern village, at somewhere about its centre, where a narrow stile now serves as an approach to the castle, the visitor sees before him, to the left, the ponderous mound and remaining wall of the castle-keep, immediately in front, the remains of a third gateway [D] corresponding in every respect with the similar entrances already noticed ; and beyond this, to the right, the fosse, rampart, and wall of the inner ballium. There are now

remaining no indications of the manner in which this gateway was approached, standing, as it did, on the further side of a wide and deep fosse of precipitous pitch. In all probability it was by means of a draw-bridge, since a more massy and permanent structure must surely have left some traces of its existence. The gateway was double, with portcullis between, as in the preceding cases; and immediately within the portcullis, to the right as you enter, was a doorway of which the upper portion only is discernible above the soil, communicating with a small square apartment, doubtless appropriated to the use of the janitor, or gate-keeper.

Through this entrance we are admitted within the enclosure of *the Inner Ballium*, a considerable area surrounded throughout its entire extent by a deep fosse and a lofty rampart of earth originally surmounted by a stray wall of rough flint, having at regular intervals small towers which the remaining basements indicate to have been square. It will be seen at once that great care was exercised in rendering the defences in this quarter substantial and complete, and this has been very effectually done. The outline of this portion of the works resembles that of an irregular horse-shoe, and to the east, opposite to the entrance from the outer ballium,

was once a massy tower with probably a small postern communicating with the double fosse in this direction. A wall in all probability here crossed the fosse immediately surrounding the keep, and joined on to the external wall of that fortress, as was the case on the north side to be noticed presently. Thus the inner ballium was secured against unauthorised intrusion on every side, and from the great elevation of the surrounding rampart, with its crowning wall, it could scarcely be overlooked from any part of the neighbouring country, by which means strict privacy was obtained. Towards the centre of the enclosure are still visible traces of foundations of a square outline [a]. These are thought to be remains of soldiers' quarters, or some such building, although it is of course impossible to speak with precision on this point. The foundations may have belonged to some structure of far more modern date though long since abandoned.

Facing immediately to the north, we have before us the fosse and elevated mound whereon once towered the lordly keep. All that now remains of this, the nucleus of the stronghold, the acropolis of the fortress, is the greater portion of the external wall enclosing the area upon which the keep itself formerly stood, and the effect

of the ruin as viewed from the inner ballium is picturesque in the extreme. The only entrance to this enclosure was from its south side directly facing the centre of the ballium, with which it was connected by a steep stair conducting to a drawbridge crossing the fosse, and probably flanked by small towers or defences of a similar nature. Considerable traces of the stair alluded to may still be seen on the steep declivity of the hill. They appear to have consisted of a regular series of steps of solid flint masonry, similar to that which prevails throughout the buildings, though probably they were originally coated with stone. A small wicket or postern gate at the summit of the stair admitted the visitor within the court-yard of the keep. The building properly so called has long since totally disappeared, and its very position with reference to the enclosing wall is doubtful. From indications on the soil, however, it probably stood a few paces from the northern side of the area, and its form might have been that of a parallelogram, the shape usually adopted in such structures of the period. Were an excavation of sufficient extent undertaken in the direction indicated, considerable remains of the edifice itself would doubtless be disclosed, but the labour and expense are rather formidable obstacles to the attempt.

An octogenarian of the parish relates that when he was about the age of twelve years, he well remembers an excavation commenced in this quarter by the then occupier of the land, and the extreme curiosity that was excited by the undertaking. A rather narrow shaft, but of regular proportions, (to the best of his recollection, eleven feet square,) and lined with compact stone, was opened by the workmen. The interior was filled with masses of broken wall and rubbish, which, as the work proceeded, increased so greatly in density and size, that at the depth of fifteen feet, where the stone lining of the shaft still continued to run on in unbroken plainness, the attempt was altogether abandoned, and the material replaced. We cannot but regret that the project was thus relinquished; for had it been pursued, it is most likely that some matters of high interest would have been developed. It was not an unusual thing for Norman keeps to be provided with a shaft of this description, communicating immediately, or by a passage, with some apartment below the foundations of the structure, to which, in case of close siege, the family might retreat, together with such valuables as could be easily transferred to the spot. The shaft of which we speak was probably a contrivance of this kind; and to strengthen

the supposition, there is a tradition extant that a subterranean communication exists between the castle and the priory, beneath the several fosses which intervene. Had the above-mentioned excavation been persevered with, this point might probably have been decided.

The external wall of the keep measures 561 feet in circumference. On the outside it is slightly angular, the angles being marked by a plain Norman buttress of stone recurring at regular intervals. This is more particularly apparent on the north-western side, where the buttresses are visible, though partially concealed by ivy. Internally, the wall, which varies in thickness from eight to eleven feet, is perfectly circular; and towards the summit was a rampart, or terrace walk, embrasured, of which traces remain toward the north and west. The masonry consists wholly of immense flints, disposed without regularity, and grouted together into a firm compact mass, a large portion of which still remains unaffected by the vicissitudes of so many seasons, and almost defying the efforts of devastating man. The whole presents a curious proof of the labour and care bestowed by the Norman masters of the soil in securing the baronial strongholds which they raised on their newly-acquired lands, and serves to show the apprehensions they entertained of the force

and resistance of the oppressed English, whom they had so unceremoniously ejected from their ancient possessions. Very many years elapsed before the Normans became peaceably settled in their conquest, during which the houseless Britons wandered from place to place, ever and anon evincing their dislike to a foreign yoke, by partial manifestations of a strength which, if concentrated in one uniform effort, might have proved irresistible. The haughty barons thus became fully sensible of the value of deep ditches and massy walls; and in the construction of a castle due attention was paid to these requisites. Immediately to the north, in the thickness of the wall, is the remaining portion of a narrow arched passage, terminating, perhaps, originally in a loop-hole or aperture for observation; and a little to the east of this, where the original wall appears to have been comparatively thin, an attempt has been made to strengthen it by the addition of a fresh breadth, the material of which, however, not being so well prepared as the former, it is now fast crumbling away. A small square tower seems also to have existed on this side, and the passage just noticed probably had immediate connexion with it.

To the north-east of the keep the fosse is doubled, forming a narrow irregular *insula*, upon which it is

evident some small tower or other outwork originally stood [B]. From the appearance of the wall of the keep in this direction, it seems that the fortress was more assailable on the east than on any other side, and the double fosse and watch-tower may have been subsequently contrived to counteract the defect.

The extent and position of the ditches are clearly indicated by the plan, and the sharpness of outline which they still present to the eye of the visitor is sufficient proof of the care and labour bestowed in their construction. The impediment they would offer to the operations of a hostile force, in the days of heavy armour and ponderous balistæ, must have been formidable enough, and thus they effectually served to check the advance of the marauding and predatory bands, who were greater objects of annoyance and apprehension to the Barons than any more disciplined troops. It is generally supposed that such defences were usually designed for the reception of water as an additional means of security, and from whence they would receive the appellation of moats. Where the site of the castle and other circumstances permitted of such an arrangement the precaution was probably adopted, but it does not appear to have been invariably the case, and in the

present instance there is ample evidence that nothing of the kind existed. The ditches were dry as now, unless under the casual accumulation of rain or snow. A little examination of the site will suffice to establish this fact. It will be observed that the ground whereon the castle and its outworks are raised, following the natural undulation of the soil, gradually increases in elevation from the river's side, a circumstance which would render the supply of water from that source a work of extreme difficulty, if not impracticable, in an age when the principles of hydrostatics were so imperfectly understood; and therefore to counteract the consequences of this deficiency, recourse was had to an expedient which served as an ingenious substitute for the protection afforded by water in such a case. A lofty and substantial wall was carried immediately across the fosse in three distinct quarters, indicated in the plan [C. C. C.], one of which still remains in a state of good preservation, on the east side of the inner ballium; another, partially existing, to the south-west of the same; and a third, joining on to the external wall of the keep, to the north-west, of which only traces faint—but not to be mistaken—are now left. The intention of this shrewd contrivance was obviously this: in the event of a detachment of hostile troops

obtaining possession of the fosse, in any particular direction, it would be impossible for them to complete the circuit of the castle without encountering a check from these walls; while the beleaguered could prosecute their defensive operations in comparative security behind the flinty screens. They are so placed that strangers, unacquainted with the locality, would come upon them abruptly, unprepared for an obstacle so simple, yet effectual, and no little confusion might have been caused by the discovery.

From the level of the keep a bird's-eye view is obtained over the whole of the works connected with the castle and the adjoining country, and a faint idea may be formed of the picturesque effect of the scene in the early days of its glory. The landscape to the west is still extremely engaging, the sight ranging along the well-wooded valley of the Nar, with the venerable ruins of the Priory in the foreground, and nearer still, between this point and the spot whereon we stand, the long line of the barbican and outer ballium. An ascent to the summit of the ancient rampart on the embrasured wall will well repay the trouble.

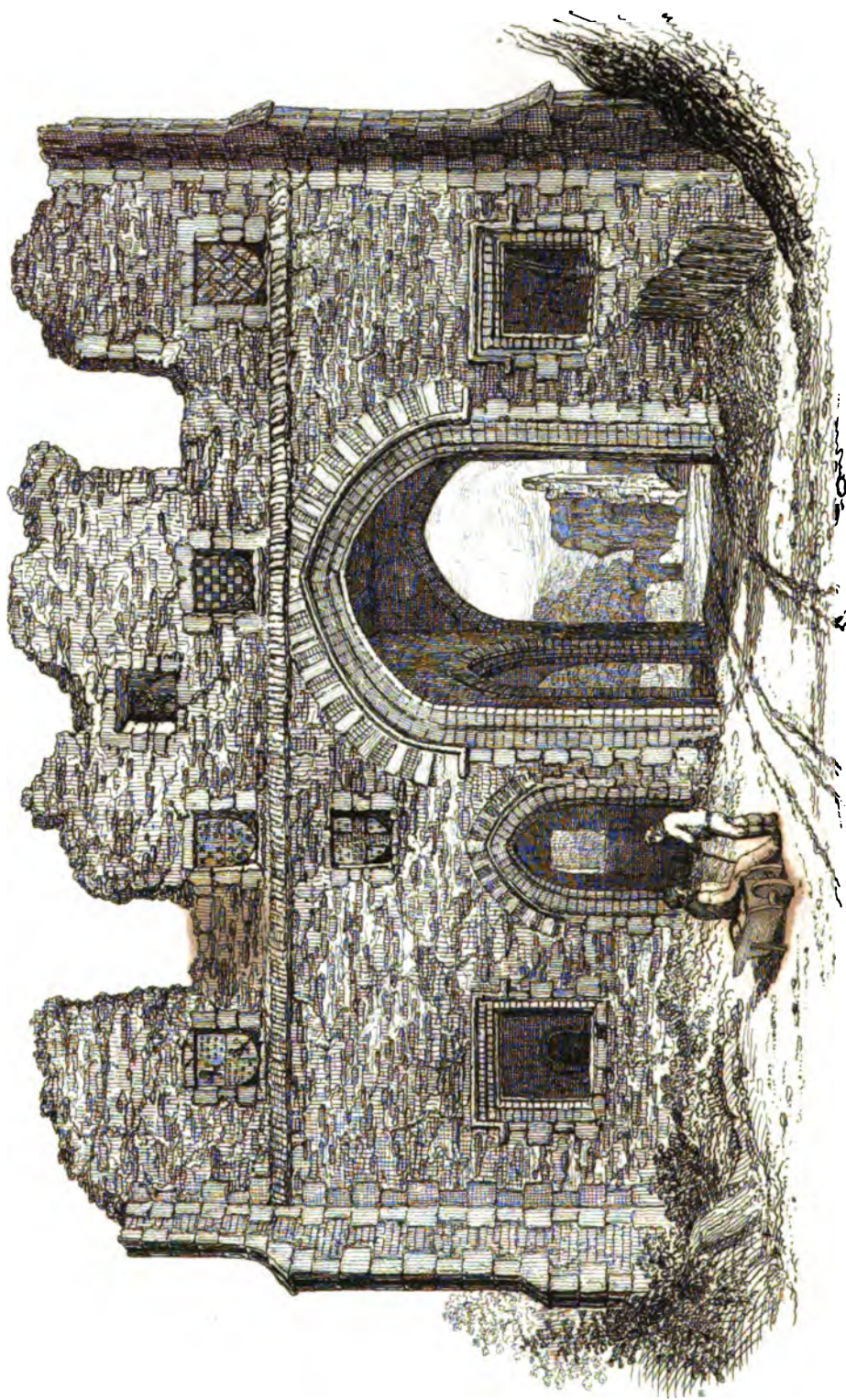
Within the barbican stands an ancient farm-house, now occupied as a cottage. It appears to have been

erected towards the latter part of the fifteenth or the commencement of the sixteenth centuries, and was probably built for the residence of a steward or some other occupant of the lands connected with the castle, when the latter, having been abandoned as a family abode, was fast disappearing, or possibly had been altogether removed. On the external face of this building occurs the Tudor rose, and a mullet pierced, of red-brick earth, but there is no other cognizance to indicate the date or the original proprietor. The western gable is terminated by a slender finial or hip-knob, having the appearance of a chimney, though it is undoubtedly not pierced for that purpose. The interior presents nothing particularly worthy of notice, having undergone various changes in the process of adaptation to other and different uses from that to which it was first applied.

We have thus surveyed the general features of this venerable remain, which, if they be found to be scanty, are nevertheless fraught with interest of a peculiar kind. There is ample scope for the exercise of fancy, and we might easily have filled the area with conjectural (though probable,) buildings appertaining to a Norman stronghold, on a scale of importance equal to the one before us. But as there is so very little left to

render such conclusions in any way decisive, we have preferred adhering strictly to matters of fact, plainly evident to the apprehension of any visitor to the spot who will take the trouble to examine the particulars we have indicated. The very dimness of the detail, rendered more conspicuous by the prominent strength of the outline, is well calculated to stimulate curiosity and to call forth the powers of a ready imagination, which every individual will find a pleasure in exercising for himself; bearing in mind the prevailing spirit and character of the times which are to be re-embodied in his mental picture.

We are now about to enter upon a still wider field of interest, with greater variety of detail and more certain data to guide our conclusions, and if we be found to be somewhat minute in our statements, it is with the hope of omitting nothing that might gratify the antiquary, or tend to afford a glimpse of the characteristics of a by-gone age to the general reader.



Enlaid by H. Hinnem from a Drawing by C. Wright.

ENTRANCE TO THE PRECINCT.



THE PRIORY, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

THE PRIORY.

HISTORICAL NOTICES.



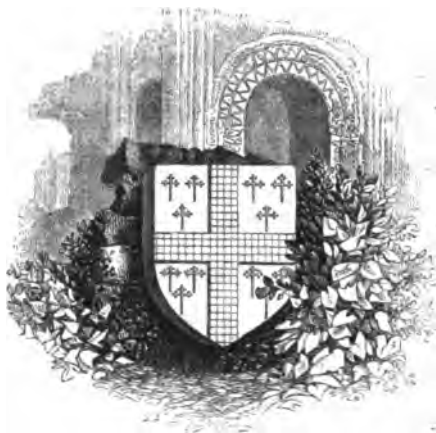
No subject can be more replete with curious interest or matter of reflection than the history of our early religious houses. Whether we view them as monuments of the pious munificence of their chivalrous founders, as the sanctuaries of neglected learning, or as the depositaries of all that tends to civilise and refine in the pursuit of art and science, they have a claim upon our veneration and regard which cannot fail to awaken a proportionate interest in the annals of their

early career. No one can pause amid the crumbling ruins of a deserted sanctuary without experiencing some desire to know wherefore and by whom it was erected, —by whom it was tenanted, and what changes led to its present desolation?—And how greatly is this natural sentiment of curiosity augmented when the subject that gives rise to it meets us in the fertile pastures of our native land!—What a train of thought does it not open to our view!—How do the feelings, habits, impressions, “the memory of departed years” rush upon our minds in dreamy but vivid colouring, as we pace the dilapidated cloister once echoing to the measured tread of the pale ascetic!—So universal seems to be the predilection for such investigations, though in many instances perhaps the parties themselves may be unconscious of it, that we know not the wayfarer, gentle or simple, who, if he have the leisure, will not turn from his path to obtain a nearer view of some inviting ruin, and there he will saunter and gaze until fairly bewildered by the seeming chaos, or that imagination has expended itself in recalling the shadowy visions of the past.

Impressed with a sense of the increasing interest felt in these lingering memorials of the past, we have endeavoured to collect under one focus several dispersed

historical notices relative to a foundation not indeed appertaining to the first class of religious houses, but occupying no insignificant rank among the number of secondary establishments, and enjoying a revenue and importance paralleled by few, surpassed by none.

We have already seen that the Priory of Castleacre owes its existence to the piety and munificence of William, first Earl De Warrenne; and the circumstance which led to its appropriation to a peculiar order of the monastic fraternity has been alluded to in our brief notice of that Baron's career. Before the



massy stronghold which its distinguished founder was erecting on his noble domain could be well completed, the pious intentions of the powerful Earl were carried into effect, and the infant fraternity of Cluniacs found rest and protection beneath the sheltering outworks of their patron's fortalice.

A favourable spot was selected within a short distance of the castle, and but little beyond the line of its outer

age, and, in contemplating the massy solidity and compactness of construction which invariably distinguish them, whether castle or convent, it is clearly apparent that had not the corroding hand of time been assisted by spoliation, violence, and neglect, they would have remained entire to this day, and to all appearance imperishable.

The name of the individual whose plans and arrangements were carried out in the construction of the priory at Acre does not remain to us; but it is reasonable to suppose that the purposes of the munificent founder were effectually supported by some inmate of the parent Abbey of Clugny, or of the numerous establishment of the great Earl himself; be it as it may, he was evidently no bungler at his vocation. Though upon a scale of limited dimensions, the existing remains bear testimony to the skill and judgment of their architect.

The precise date of the foundation has never hitherto been correctly given, the various authorities that allude to it generally assigning a year antecedent or subsequent to the actual one as the period for the commencement of the work. Now this discrepancy, involving no error of particular importance, would not, in a general way, be of any moment; but the remarkable part of the business is, that the real fact of the case should, for so long a



Enched by H. Minham.

DAYE OF THE FOUNDATION.

period, have escaped the observation of any person carefully inspecting the ruins.

The *true date* of the foundation actually exists at the present moment, within the shattered precincts of the priory itself.

Let any visitor to the ruins, sufficiently venturous to climb a few feet of broken stair (and with common caution the ascent is both easy and secure), ascend that which conducts to the first range of arcades running round the north transept of the conventual church, and, passing along the narrow passage which forms the floor of the arcade, let him proceed to the western side of the transept. On the flanking wall of the passage to the right, securely sheltered from the fickle rigour of our climate, the visitor will remark, conspicuously impressed upon the stucco, the date in question, of which the accompanying illustration is a faithful transcript.

There seems no reason to doubt that we have here presented to us a correct record of the true period of the foundation of this establishment. It is obvious, from the sharp angular character of the impress, that it could only have been made while the stucco was still moist, for any attempt to cut into its substance when dry would only result in the flaking and chipping of the external

surface, and admitting that the stucco of these passages was renewed at a much later period—for the existing church itself was an erection of sixty years subsequent to the actual foundation of the establishment—still we may reasonably regard this date as the renewal of a former one, in this or in some other portion of the building, religiously preserved or carefully replaced by the then occupants of the priory.

To the ready acumen of Dr. Murray, the present excellent Bishop of Rochester, who personally inspected the remains a few years since, we are indebted for the determination of this interesting point. From it we learn that the foundation of the Priory of Acre took place A. D. 1084, in the eighteenth year of the reign of the Conqueror.

In order to read the date, as it thus stands recorded on the wall, aright, the visitor to the ruins must place himself with his back to the wall, side by side with the impress; or the reader of these pages must reverse the book, so as to bring himself into a corresponding position with our illustration, and, crossing himself after the mode pursued by members of the Church of Rome, commencing with the upper figure 1, as the top of the cross, passing to the cypher 0, as the bottom, and then

touching the left and right sides of his breast respectively, to indicate the situation of the figures 8 and 4, they will be found to correspond with the act, and the perfect date of 1084 will result. The simple ingenuity of this contrivance, at once to keep alive in the minds of the inmates of the priory the munificence of their earliest benefactor, and at the same time to remind them of the prominent purposes for which the foundation was endowed, cannot fail to be apparent.

The foundation effected, the superstructure proceeded with despatch. And here it may not be inappropriate to say a few words on the prevailing character of Norman architecture, not with the view to a lengthened disquisition on so fertile a theme; but to furnish the reader with a few of the more prominent characteristics of the style, so as to enable him readily to recognise Norman work, wherever any traces of it may come under his observation.

The general character, then, of Norman architecture is that of massive solidity and strength, without, at the same time, conveying the impression of disproportionate heaviness. This is, in a great degree, ingeniously obviated by the admirable disposition of ornamental mouldings and enrichments, which, partaking of the same marked

simplicity as that of the bulk of the edifice itself, by their profuse dispersion over the plain surface of the building, impart to it a most agreeable character of lightness and relief.

The distinguishing feature of this style consists in the circular arch, sometimes constituting a perfect semicircle, sometimes stilted, and sometimes approaching somewhat to the outline of a horseshoe, springing either from a single column, or from a solid pier decorated with half-columns; which diversities of arrangement may be noticed in various parts of the remains at Castleacre. The abacus, or crowning tile, of a Norman pillar will almost invariably be found to have its lower edge chamfered or sloped off, the slope in some instances being slightly hollowed out: the shaft of the pillar, though generally plain, is sometimes highly ornamented.

Another marked characteristic of Norman work is the frequent employment of a peculiar zig-zag moulding, technically known as the chevron, which is carried not only over the semicircular arch of a doorway, but over a successive series of arches in the nave of a church, as in our present subject, where the chevron ornament, both single and double, has been employed with rich effect. Billet-moulding, an ornament resembling equal cubes of

billet-wood cut into regular portions, and carried alternately round the outline of an arch in the same manner as the chevron, is another decisive feature of this style and may occasionally be remarked here, though it exists in great perfection in the remaining portion of the Priory Church at Binham. To these we may add the spiral and the cable mouldings which invariably characterise the Norman style, and which are usually employed with beautiful effect in the enrichment of the principal doorways to their churches and conventual buildings. Upon such doorways, indeed, the most lavish display of ornament was bestowed ; the arch usually consisting of enriched bands embracing the principal ornaments peculiar to Norman work, and blended with admirable judgment into an harmonious whole.

Norman windows may readily be recognised by their being long and narrow, and round-headed, set near to the outer surface of the walls, and splayed from within only, a peculiarity which distinctly marks them from windows of purely Saxon origin, which, in other respects, somewhat closely resemble the specimens of early Norman. One point respecting them is deserving of particular attention, namely, that Norman windows of early date are invariably plain ; at a later period we find them

enriched with chevron or billet beading, in the same way as the arch; and at a later period still, they are sometimes obtusely pointed. The recollection of this distinction will frequently prove of considerable assistance in determining the age of any structure where they may be found to occur. Circular windows of this period are also occasionally, though rarely, met with in this country; on the Continent they recur more frequently.

Buttresses were very sparingly employed in buildings of the Norman era, the ponderous solidity of their edifices not requiring such extraneous aid; whenever they chanced to be introduced, it was rather for the sake of ornament than use, and their outline is uniformly straight and plain throughout their entire length without break or projection. Thus, buttresses being so generally dispensed with, the external surface of churches and large buildings would present an unsightly superficies of uniform plainness. To obviate this, several decorative expedients were adopted, of which the most frequent and conspicuous are a series of blind arches and arcades, sometimes arranged singly side by side, and sometimes interlacing the one with the other, and thus carried in parallel ranges over the exterior surface of the building, concentrating, as it were, in rich profusion on the western

façade of the structure. The west front of our Priory church affords a pleasing illustration of this.

The few hints we have given on the subject will usually enable any one to recognise the character of Norman works; and in returning to our historical notices of the Priory of Acre, it only remains to observe, with reference to the architectural undertakings of this extraordinary people, that the prodigious masses of them which continue to our day, clearly imply that such vast handiwork could only result from a methodical division of labour. The clerical architect, we may suppose, supplied the plan, outline, dimensions, and general character of the building; the master mason devoted his attention to the manual development of its construction; while the various details, inclusive of the decorative parts, were intrusted to a distinct class of artisans, to whom we can find no corresponding class at the present day, the invention as well as the execution of such portions being left entirely to their discretion.

No sooner were the works at the Priory in a sufficient state of forwardness for the reception of inmates than De Warrenne hastened to complete his munificent purpose, by providing the infant establishment with a noble endowment. From the charter which he granted to the

fraternity we learn, that for the good of his own soul, and for the souls of his father, mother, and heirs, he had caused this Priory to be built and appropriated to the use of thirty-six monks, exclusive of a prior, of the Cluniac order of St. Benedict, subordinate to the Priory of St. Pancras at Lewes, and as a cell to the parent abbey of the order at Clugny in Burgundy. He then gives to the use and benefit of this institution the church and advowson of Acre (formerly distinguished as *East Acre*, the original of the present village of Castleacre, and a little to the north of the latter), the churches and advowsons of Methwold, Wickmere, and Trunch, with two parts of the tithes of his possessions at Grimstone, all in Norfolk, together with the church and advowson of Leaden Roding in the county of Essex. This grant was duly confirmed by Bishop Herbert de Losing, by whom the conventual church was also with all solemnity consecrated, and dedicated to the honour of God, St. Mary, St. Peter, and St. Paul.

In this way ample provision was already made for the wants of the infant institution, dependent as it was, by the will of the founder, upon a larger establishment; and from this period commenced a series of benefactions, gifts, and endowments, which, augmenting with extra-

ordinary rapidity, ere long enabled the cell to throw off the trammels of its dependence, and to take a proud standing among its free compeers of the land. A sketch of the number of these benefactions, and the nature of some of them, so far as they are capable of being traced, will serve in some measure to illustrate the *animus* which obtained among the wealthy and devout of the middle ages in the disposal of their ample resources. We would fain indulge the hope that our Priory deservedly acquired its rapid accession of emoluments and honours from the high and consistent character for piety, sobriety, and benevolence which it maintained; but when we call to mind the pride of wealth in some, the influence of superstition in others of its benefactors, and the grasping spirit of appropriation, *per fas aut nefas*, which not unfrequently actuated the monks and churchmen of those ages, we are constrained to hesitate in our judgment. It is but fair to add, however, that no syllable of censure has transpired to the detriment or discredit of the monks of Castleacre.

But in order as much as possible to preserve the continuity of the thread of our narrative, we shall touch upon the more prominent points of its history, before we proceed to enumerate the principal benefactors to the establishment.

William, the second De Warrenne, who had himself been a witness to the deed of grant conferred by his father, liberally seconded the pious exertions of his predecessor, and bestowed still further revenues, lands, and emoluments upon the picturesque Priory "standing under the walls of his Castle of Acre," an example munificently followed by many of his contemporaries, as well as by the succeeding members of his own family.

To give additional importance and weight to the benefactions of the founder and his son, King Henry I. condescended to confirm their grants by a deed under his sign-manual, the form of which is preserved by Blomefield, to the following effect:

Notum sit præsentib. et futuris qd Ego Henricus, Dei gratia Rex Anglor. pro salute animæ meæ et antecessorum meor. et pro statu et prosperitate regni, concedo Deo et Sanctæ Mariæ de Achra, et Sanctis Apostolis Petro et Paulo, et monachis de Sancto Pancratio ibidem Deo servantib. quicquid Will. de Warrenna dedit eis, scil. in ipsa Achra duas carucatas * terre, et hocq. fregerunt de brueriis ejus, et culturam cum mora ubi eccā fundata est.

Signum HEN. REGIS.

S. ROBTI. Epis.

S. HERBERTI Epis.

S. ROGERI Epis.

S. WILLIAM DE ALBINI, &c. &c. &c.

* *The carucate* was probably an extent of 150 acres, and according to this computation, the Priory was endowed at the outset with 300 acres of land.

Among the signatures to this document may be noticed that of William de Albini, the lord of large possessions in Norfolk, and afterwards conspicuous for his marriage with Adeliza, widow of Henry I., in right of which he succeeded to the Earldom and estates of Arundel.

So rapid was the increase of grants and benefactions, that within little more than fifty years from the period of its foundation, and about A. D. 1140, we find the Priory to possess a right of tithes or a right of presentation to not less than twenty-seven parishes in Norfolk alone, besides the patronage of the Priory of St. Andrew at Bromholm, which had been annexed as a cell to that of Castleacre. The parishes referred to were the under-mentioned, and were duly confirmed to this establishment by Edward, Bishop of Norwich, in the above year:—

Acre, Newton (by Acre,) East and West Lexham, Great Dunham with the Chapel of St. Mary, Kempstone, Weasenham St. Peter and St. Paul, Shingham, Methwold, Ottringham, Trunch, Wickmere, Sherringham, Hellesdon, Fulmondestone, East and West Basham, Tatterset, South Creak and Congham.

Extensive as the list already appears, it is but a fraction of the number which eventually came into the possession of this wealthy establishment. Among the

benefactions conferred by the liberality of the second De Warrenne were certain lands, the revenues of which were to be appropriated to the erection of a new and more spacious conventual church, the original edifice being found too small and insignificant for the increasing importance of the establishment. Accordingly, somewhere about this period, the new structure, of which the remains still exist, was commenced, and in the year 1148, it was solemnly consecrated by Turbus, Bishop of the diocese.

The tide of prosperity continuing to flow uninterruptedly in favour of this institution, we find that in the year 1283 the fortunate Prior possessed in virtue of his office an estate of not less than four-hundred-and-ninety acres of land, of which four-hundred-and-sixty were arable, twenty pasture, and ten meadow, besides five water-mills, a very fruitful source of revenue in those days,—lands in the adjacent village divided among thirty-six tenants, a court baron, and certain other privileges of the free gift of the Earls of Surrey and Warrenne, which Blomefield describes as two folds, two bulls, and two free boars. From all this it appears that the emoluments of the Prior were by this time of considerable value and importance.

The result of all this accumulation of prosperous fortune might have been anticipated. No longer requiring foreign aid in its support, the chapter of the establishment panted to throw off the yoke of dependence, and from a subordinate cell to take its position among free and independent Priories. The time at length arrived for the realisation of their wish, and in the year 1373, the 47th of the reign of Edward III. the chapter proceeded formally to memorialise the King, and to certify that the Prior and Brethren of the Cluniac foundation at Acre were all *bonâ fide* Englishmen, and not aliens or the subjects of any foreign power, nor did they pay tribute, or receive pensions, or owe obedience to the Abbot of Clugny, except when he came into England to visit the Priory. This formal representation, well supported doubtless by cogent and *weighty* reasons, obtained for the Priory the coveted privilege. It was forthwith declared to be *indigena* (native), and not *alienigena* (alien), emancipated from its subordinate connexion with the parent Abbey of Clugny, and admitted to the full rights and privileges of an independent community. This was a proud and gratifying event for the worthy brotherhood, who could henceforth regulate their economy according to their own free-will and pleasure, without

lett or hindrance; but it may be questioned whether the after results were altogether so advantageous to the community as they may have anticipated. No fresh benefaction or increase of possession occurs after this period; and although the increasing partiality in favour of the Mendicants may have had some influence in the matter, the proclamation of its independence seems entirely to have checked the stream of patronage which, so long as it retained its character of a subordinate cell, continued to flow upon it.

The enumeration of benefactors presents us with many names of distinction and influence; the list, doubtless, is far from complete, and perhaps only such are recorded whose grants were of sufficient importance to merit the distinction. The dates annexed refer to the period of the respective benefactions, wherever they could be determined.

BENEFACTORS.	DATES OF BENEFACTIONS.
William, first Earl de Warrenne	A.D. 1084
Robert de Vaux	temp. Rufi.
Roger de Tony	temp. eod.
Robert, lord of Massingham	temp. eod.
Bartholomew de Glanville	1120
William, second Earl de Warrenne	1134
Hugh de Vancy	temp. Hen. I.

BENEFACTORS.	DATES OF BENEFACTIONS.
Isabella, Countess de Warrenne	temp. eod.
Jeffrey de Faverches	temp. eod.
Peter de Cranwich	temp. eod.
Phillip de Candris	temp. Steph.
William de Huntingfield	temp. eod.
William, third Earl de Warrenne	1145
Hardouin Bacon	1154
Hubert de Montechensi	1154
Nicholas le Syre	ante 1160
King Henry 2nd	1170
Herbert de Sudacra	temp. Hen. 2.
Godfrey de Lisewis	1170
Sir Maurice de Barsham	1171
Alan, son of Godfrey de Swaffham	uncertain.
John Hautyn, lord of Herringsby	1196
Hamlyn Plantagenet, fourth Earl de Warrenne	1199
Sir Ralph de Beaufoe	uncertain.
Sir Robert de la Haye	uncertain.
Ralph de Warrenne	temp. Johan.
Sir Ralph de Pavilly	temp. Ric. I.
William, son of Roger de Huntingfield	1218
Sir Walter de Grancourt	1219
Henry de Rie	uncertain.
Sir Frederic de Caprville	1227
Hugh de Vaux	1240
Sir Eudo de Harsyke	1240

BENEFACTORS.	DATES OF BENEFACTIONS.
Sir Alexander de Harsyke	uncertain.
William d'Estouteville, lord of Gressenhall	1244
Sir Osbert de Stradsett	1250
Adam Talbot	1252
Sir John de Loddon	1254
William, fifth Earl de Warrenne	1262
Roger de Cressy	1264
Robert de Mortimer	1265
John le Strange	uncertain.
William Bardolf	uncertain.
Sir Hugh de Polstead	1270
Sir Richard le Russ	uncertain.
Ralph de Pavilly	1273
John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury	1283
John Plantagenet, sixth Earl de Warrenne	1315

The above catalogue, commencing with the name of De Warrenne, terminates also with the name of another member of the same family, and he the most distinguished of his race.

Sir Eudo and Sir Alexander de Harsyke, whose names are likewise recorded, were members of a wealthy and influential family holding possessions in the parish of Southacre immediately adjacent to the precincts of the Priory. Sir Eudo flourished in the time of Henry III.,

and his effigies in stone, still extant in the north aisle of Southacre Church, shows him to have belonged to the distinguished fraternity of the Knights Templars.

It were tedious to enumerate the various gifts and benefactions which were bestowed upon this foundation, nor is it always easy to trace the nature of them. Generally speaking, they consisted of lands, churches, manors, and dependent cells, which last we shall more minutely particularise as belonging to the history of our Priory. But one or two of the donations are of a description so characteristic of the time, that they merit separate notice.

Henry de Rie, of the family of Eudo de Rye or Rhia, a companion of the Conqueror, by his will, without date, bestowed upon the monks of Acre, his mill situated at Worthing in Norfolk, *together with* Thurston the miller, his (Thurston's) *mother, and brothers, and all their substance!* We can readily suppose what became of the mill, but how the unfortunate miller and his family were turned to account is not so easy to guess. Henry de Rie must have been a very simple or a very bad man, and it is hoped that the change of masters would be to the advantage of poor Thurston. The fact, however, is curiously illustrative of feudal tyranny.

We might reasonably conclude that a foundation of such repute and importance as the Priory of Acre would have attracted some degree of the support and bounty of the Metropolitan. But of all the several Primates who filled the Archiepiscopal chair of Canterbury, and of these some were intimately connected with the Arundel family, the name of only one occurs in the enumeration of benefactors, and he, quaintly observes Blomefield, "contented himself with granting *indulgences*,"—privileges certainly, but such as the worthy fraternity would probably have readily foregone for the sake of more tangible bounty. This was John Peckham, who, when Archbishop of Canterbury, granted, in the year 1283, an *indulgence* of thirty days to all who would pray for the soul of William, the third Earl De Warrenne, and fifteen days for that of Ella, his Countess, and twenty days more for the souls of William, the first Earl, and Gondrede his wife.

No description of property tended more fully to enhance the weight and importance of a religious foundation than the possessions of cells, either dependent and tributary, or subject in matters of discipline and spiritual control. The influence accruing to the superior establishment from such appendages must be at once

apparent, and as intimately connected with the history of our Priory, we shall proceed to give a brief sketch of them separately. They were in number seven, of which the most memorable was

BROMHOLM.

In, or about the year 1120, the Priory of Acre received at the hands of Bartholomew de Glanville, a valuable gift in the annexation of the Priory of Bromholm, a recent foundation of rising importance and celebrity.

This establishment originated in the munificence of William de Glanville, who projected the foundation A. D. 1113, for a prior and ten monks, and at the same time liberally endowed it. The conventual Church was solemnly dedicated to the honour of God, St. Mary, and St. Andrew; and upon its completion, Bartholomew, the son of the founder, granted it to the Priory of Acre as a subordinate cell to that institution. In this position it remained during the greater part of two centuries, until, in the year 1294, it was emancipated from this subordination by a bull of Pope Celestine V. and thenceforward became an independent establishment. In the meanwhile, however, it received proofs of considerable favour

and patronage, and numbered amongst its benefactors King Henry III., who, in the year 1233, resided there with his court, and not only confirmed all previous grants, but added materially to its endowments.

The heraldic bearings of this establishment merit notice, because the device they bore has relation to an object for which Bromholm obtained a degree of celebrity scarcely surpassed by the far-famed attractions of the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. This was no other than a remarkable Cross, placed within the conventual church, and popularly known as the Holy Rood of Bromholm. The reputation of this relic (for such it was esteemed) extended far and wide, until it became one of the most attractive objects of pilgrimage in the kingdom.

A curious manuscript, still extant in the British Museum, informs us that a certain priest of the name of Hugh, a native of Norfolk, on his return from the Holy Land, whither he had journeyed in pursuance of a vow, brought with him on his return this cross, which had there enjoyed no small share of reputation, having been triumphantly carried before the Emperor Baldwin in his fearful encounters with the Saracens. When or by what means it came into the possession of the fortunate Hugh

is not particularised, but the Priory church of St. Andrew at Bromholm had the happy luck to become the depository of this inestimable treasure,—inestimable, because it was said to have been constructed out of the wood of the true cross, by order of the Empress Helena, and from those portions of that fatal tree which had been most sprinkled by the blood of the Redeemer. Whether authentic or not, the very repute of this circumstance was enough to inflame the zeal and devotion of the pious throughout the land, and the Priory of Bromholm reaped the full advantage of its extraordinary acquisition. The miracles ascribed to the beneficial influence of this Holy Rood are as numerous as they are startling, and one cannot but regret that so invaluable an instrument should have been swept away by the ruthless hand of scepticism and reform. Worthy old Fuller concentrates his panegyric of its merits in one emphatic sentence; “amongst all others, commend me to the cross at the Priory of Bromholm in Norfolk;” whilst another authority gravely assures us that nineteen blind persons were restored to sight, and no less than thirty-nine raised from the dead through the instrumentality of this cross! If the authenticity of but a thirty-ninth part of the latter enumeration could be established

with certainty, and beyond the suspicion of fraud or collusion, the relic assuredly deserved all that was said in its honour, and more. As it was, indeed, oblations and pilgrimages without number were made to it, and the commissioners, at the surrender in 1534, returned the value of the former at somewhere about £5. 12s. 9d., a sum equivalent to £84. 11s. 3d.,—a large amount in those days.

Upon a review of the resources of this foundation, some short time previous to the surrender, it was ascertained to hold the patronage and advowson of nine churches in Norfolk, and four in Suffolk, ten valuable manors, and lands, interests, and possessions in fifty-eight parishes. Upon its dissolution, it passed into the family of Sir Thomas Wodehouse of Waxham.

The official seal of Bromholm yielded a large impression in red wax, nearly three inches in diameter, presenting in the centre the effigies of St. Andrew seated, holding a cross in his raised right hand, his head encircled by a nimbus. Over this appeared a bust of the Virgin and Child, and this inscription surrounded the whole :

Sigillum. Prioris. et. Convent Sci. Andree. de. Bromhold.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. MARY AT MASSINGHAM.

This was a small house, founded by one Nicholas le Syre, and annexed as a cell to the Priory of Acre, the foundation being duly dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas. It continued as a subordinate cell until the Dissolution, when it fell in common with its parent establishment. It appears, however, that although dependent so far as discipline was concerned, this religious house obtained considerable revenues and lands to itself, and became in a great degree rich and influential.

SLEVESHOLM, OR SLEWSHAM,

Was a small Priory founded by William, third Earl de Warrenne, and situated in the vicinity of Methwold, in a fenny district from whence it derived its cognomen. It was attached as a cell to Acre, and consisted of a few Cluniacs with a Prior; which functionary was always elected by the Chapter of Acre from among their own body. The house was dedicated to the Virgin and St. Giles, and the charter and privileges secured to its inmates by the liberality of their patron were fully con-

firmed at a subsequent date by John Plantagenet, the sixth Earl. It shared the fate of its foster parent at the Dissolution.

MENDHAM.

The bounty of William de Huntingfield was evinced towards the Priory of Acre in the grant of an extensive tract comprising the whole isle, (as it was called,) of Medenham or Mendham in Suffolk, upon the stipulation that the Chapter should cause a substantial Cell and Church of stone to be erected in a place called Hurst, within the limits of the above parish. This foundation he liberally endowed with manors, rents, and churches, an example followed by other benefactors with corresponding munificence, so that in process of time it occupied no inconsiderable place in the possessions of Acre Priory whose fate it shared at the surrender. The conventual church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the establishment consisted of a Prior and nine monks, usually supplied from Acre.

NORMANSBURGH.

A small establishment, but by no means a needy one, under this name, was founded within the parish of South Rainham in 1160, by William de Lisewis, whose son Godfrey, succeeding to the possessions of his father, before the completion of his pious undertaking, annexed the house to the Priory of Acre as a subordinate Cell, upon the express condition that the Chapter of that house should keep at least three Cluniac monks at Normansburgh. The compact seems to have been pretty literally fulfilled, and that is all ; for it does not appear that the Cell of Normansburgh ever at any time boasted of *more* than three monks and a Prior. Notwithstanding, this miniature monastery obtained considerable favour from the devout and wealthy. It was more than sufficiently for its wants endowed with lands in Rainham, Oxwick, Brisley, Gateley, and Godwick, together with a manor, the advowson of the church of South Rainham, the hermitage of Wiggenhall, besides other rents and revenues. Its chapel, of which some fragments remain, was dedicated to the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist. Of course the cream of its resources found its way to the parental coffers at Acre, and the relative position of both houses was maintained until the surrender.

CRABHOUSE.

One of the Priors of Normansburgh, about the year 1181, founded a small Nunnery in the parish of Wiggenshall, for nuns of the Order of Fontevrault, which foundation, with the consent of Godfrey de Lisewis, he granted to Lena, daughter of Godric de Lenne, for herself as Prioress and seven nuns. Its church was dedicated to the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist, and the foundation received considerable benefactions from various quarters. Godfrey de Lisewis, above-mentioned, confirmed the grant of this nunnery as a cell to the Priory of Acre, with which it continued to be associated until the surrender. This is a rare instance of a cell being occupied by a religious order, differing in sex and constitution from the parent establishment to which it was appropriated.

GUTHLAC'S STOW.

This was nothing more than a Chapelry erected upon lands in an ancient hamlet, forming part of the parish of Swaffham, known as the Stow, or Guthlac's Stow, a name apparently of Danish origin. These lands were granted to the Priory of Acre by Alan de Swaffham, some time in the reign of Henry II., upon the stipulation

that the chapter should furnish a priest to officiate in the Chapel of St. Guthlac, at least twice in the week. The distance from the priory being little more than four miles, the terms were easy of fulfilment, and so effectually did the services at the Chapel win the good-will of its frequenters, that in a very short time the lands so obtained to the priory received considerable addition, and became an estate of important value.

We forbear to particularise other chapelries, chauntries, hospitals, and anchorages, which belonged to or were connected with this foundation, and we must soon turn our attention to the closing scenes of its prosperous career, when it was compelled to resign its privileges and yield up its acquisitions to the hand of power. In the peaceful enjoyment of its ample revenues, it held on the even tenour of its way without lett or hindrance, until the regal fiat went forth for its suppression.

The fraternity assembled here seem to have been throughout a retiring and inoffensive set of men, concerning whom if there be nothing eminently conspicuous for worth or talent to record, there is at the same time nothing of an opposite character to lay to their charge. Whether the austere rules of their order were rigidly adhered to, or whether that measure of laxity and demo-

ralisation, which too frequently predominated among monastic institutions toward the later period of their existence in this land, and which so materially accelerated their downfall, pervaded this society, it is equally impossible to determine. We would charitably hope not; and allowing ample latitude for a deviation from the rigid principles of their foundation, arising from the change of time, circumstances, and opinions, we would believe that the monks of Castleacre at least were not altogether amenable to the sweeping condemnation which so justly devolved upon many of their compeers. Tales, indeed, are told, and rumours rife, of sundry unclerical jollifications and unhallowed doings within the walls of this foundation, but they have no better authenticity than "old wives' fables;" and when we reflect how generally every circumstance that can be established to the prejudice of a life is prone to be caught at and dwelt upon to the exclusion of every redeeming fact, we may infer from the silence of history, both local and general, that nothing very reprehensible can be fairly laid to the charge of the inmates of our Priory.

We may form some estimate of the extent of their resources from the recorded statement of their posses-

sions, when at the zenith of their greatness and importance. At that time the Priory possessed eleven manors or lordships, lands, tithes, and rents, in upwards of one hundred and forty-two parishes in Norfolk alone ; —the advowsons or patronage of thirty-three churches in the same county, and the advowsons or patronage of eight churches in other counties.

One other source of emolument, though insignificant when compared with what has been already detailed, must not be overlooked. No conventual church could be deemed complete without its relic or relics, and it were a curious task to have framed a statistical account of their numbers, nature, and variety, at a time when almost every little parish church could offer something, were it but a single hair, to the gaze and osculations of the unhesitating devotee. The traveller on the Continent at the present day is often staggered at the surprising number and variety of such precious deposits which everywhere are thrust upon his attention ;—what must it have been when the amount might easily have been quadrupled without exhausting the number of such authentic treasures ? The Priory of Acre had its relics, but what they were, with one exception, we are not informed. The chief object of attraction was the arm of

St. Philip, a saint who certainly had nothing to do with the foundation in any way ; and why, how, or when, this peculiar fragment found its way to the relic-coffer of the worthy Cluniacs, it is useless to imagine. Might not an emulous spirit of rivalry have something to do with it ? —The Austin Canons of the neighbouring Priory of Westacre were privileged in the possession of a single finger of St. Andrew, duly mounted in silver, as such a treasure deserved to be. Upon some occasion the chapter of Westacre rather profanely *pamned* this ingenious specimen for no less a sum than forty pounds sterling, (an amount at the lowest computation equivalent to £400 of the present value,)—a pledge which they had not the good fortune to redeem up to the time of the surrender, when the king's commissioners absolutely refused to do so on the plea that it was not worth a fortieth part of the money ! Now, it may be, that the Cluniacs, not to be out-done by the Austin Canons, set about to find a rival attraction to the incomparable finger, and this would account for the timely appearance of St. Philip's disjointed limb. The relic attracted a competent share of admirers, who duly "paid for peeping." In the year 1534, the value of oblations to this arm was estimated at upwards of ten shillings.

The enumeration of Priors who successively presided over the affairs of this community is remarkably complete; the name of the first only being wanting. The following list will show the order of their succession and the dates of their respective appointments, so far as they could be correctly ascertained.

PRIORS OF CASTLEACRE.

Angevine		about A.D.	1130
Richard			1148
Jordain			1160
Odo			1180
Hugh			1190-5
Maimone			1200
Lambert de Kempstone			1203
Philip de Mortimer			1210
Robert de Alençon			1220-7
Ralph de Weasenham			1239
William de Kent			***
Adam			1250
John de Granges			1255
Walter de Stanmere			1258-67
Robert de Hakbeach			1270
William de Shoreham			***
Benedict			1286

Robert Porter	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1308
John Hamelyn	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
John de Acra	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Walter de Franceys	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1311
Peter de Jocello	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1317-24
Guy	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1329-37
William de Warrenne	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	uncertain.
Walter Picot	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Thomas de Wiggenhall	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
John Okinston	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Simon Sutton	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Thomas Bayley	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Thomas Tunbridge	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
John Sharesale	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1428
Thomas Bates	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Richard Bennet	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1452
Nicholas	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
John Plumstead	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
John Amflets	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1482
John Winchelsy	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1510
Thomas Chambers	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***
Thomas Malling	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	***

Hence it appears, that from the forty-sixth year after the foundation of the Priory until the period of its dissolution, the establishment was successively under

the superintendence of thirty-eight priors, of whom the first six enumerated in the list seem to have been purely Normans, the rest gradually assuming more of a native character until English names alone appear. Of the doings or sayings of these worthies, nothing authentic is left on record, but it is interesting to observe that a member of the noble family of De Warrenne was amongst those who in turn conducted the affairs of his ancestral foundation. This was somewhere about the time of the last earl, to whose restless and vacillating character he could have been no stranger.

We have now a favourable opportunity for noticing a peculiarity, abundantly exemplified in the foregoing list, as well as in that of benefactors, and other similar tables given in these pages. It relates to a point, familiar enough to the antiquary, but which may possibly have escaped the notice of the general reader, although it merits attention; since it serves to throw considerable light upon the origin of surnames borne by families and individuals, particularly in our own country. Indeed, it is very possible that the great majority of surnames of English growth are referable to some such source as we are about to indicate, and many a family throughout the length and breadth of the land, at the present time and

for long years past plunged in circumstances of obscurity, might trace its origin to some individual of note in centuries gone by.

It is pretty well understood that many familiar names of every-day occurrence have originated in the honest calling, occupation, trade, or pursuit exercised by the respective progenitors of the parties bearing them in some remote period. To this source may be referred such surnames as Miller, Baker, Butcher, Carpenter, Forester, Bowman, the frequently recurring Smith, &c., &c. Thus, in days gone by, in some rural district or provincial town, where perhaps but one of a craft practised his peculiar calling, the honest master of the forge would be familiarly known among his neighbours as John, Smith, i. e. *the smith*; the worthy presiding genius of the water-mill would be designated Robert, Miller, i. e. *the miller*, and so on; and the definite article being generally omitted in common parlance, the resulting appellatives, primarily indicating the respective professional employments of the parties bearing them, would, in process of time, become the distinguishing family name of their posterity. It should be remembered, that at the period referred to no system of baptismal registration existed, and we may thus reasonably infer that in many instances

the original surname of the family was lost, and superseded by the familiar appellative derived from an honest occupation ; which will readily account for the frequency of such names, without any ties of relationship existing between the parties to whom they belong.

The same remark obtains with respect to surnames of a less conspicuous character. The possessors of manorial rights or lordships, and many who rose to eminence in a civil or military capacity, were commonly designated from their respective lordships or possessions, and in some cases from the place of their nativity. Thus we have Ralph *de* Weasenham, Lambert *de* Kempstone, Peter *de* Cranwich, Osbert *de* Stradsett, John *de* Loddon, &c., deriving those appellatives from their peculiar domains or lordships of Weasenham, Kempstone, Cranwich, Stradsett, and Loddon, all places in Norfolk. In due time the expletive falling into disuse, the family name assumed somewhat of the character of the lordship from which it was originally derived, and retained it although the possessions that originated it might long have passed from the family itself. Abundant instances of this simple derivation might be produced, and it may undoubtedly be exemplified in every county in the kingdom, where families and individuals may still be found bearing

surnames perfectly or closely assimilating to the names of places or manors within the limits of their respective counties. The subject is curious and interesting, but a more extended examination of its principles would lead us too far away from our main subject. We have said enough to enable the reader to exercise his ingenuity in tracing to their source many family surnames which may come under his observation.

Our historical notice of the Priory of Acre brings us at length to the closing scenes of its career. The regal fiat had gone forth, and the emissaries of the spoiler were not slack to execute his rapacious behests. Abbey and priory, cell and chantry, anchorage and spital, were summoned in rapid succession to disgorge their accumulated revenues and time-hallowed privileges, while their dismayed inmates were scattered with very little consideration through the length and breadth of the land.

It was on the 22d day of November, 1537, that a small section of the chapter of the Priory of Acre by its act and deed alienated for ever the rights, privileges, possessions, and revenues of its venerable foundation. We cannot rightly estimate the feelings with which the parties to this sacrifice fulfilled their painful task; it could not be without a struggle, nor can we suppose that

the impulse of the heart accompanied the act of the hand. Resistance, of course, would have been utterly vain, nor are the occasions frequent in which any attempt of the kind was made. Many religious houses, with a view to obtaining the best terms and as much consideration as possible, anticipated the desires of the King by a voluntary surrender of that which else would have been taken without scruple; and it is not unlikely that the Cluniacs of Acre were of this number. It is evident, however, that the transfer was not accomplished without some manifestation of opposition, not to be mistaken, though tacit. Of the thirty-six members constituting the fraternity (supposing the establishment to be full or thereabouts, at the period of its dissolution), barely one-third affixed their names to the fatal deed which drove them from their quiet retreat; and these, more pliant or less spirited than the rest, or, what is more likely, allured by timely and cogent reasons on the part of the representatives of majesty, confirmed the transfer by their signatures. The deed of surrender is signed by the Prior and ten monks only; the remainder took no part in the act save by an eloquent silence. From that moment the Cluniacs of Acre ceased to be.

This document, which is curious enough in itself, and the more especially from its presenting an average speci-

men of the stringent authority and wholesale appropriation exercised by the King in similar cases, we are happy in having it in our power to give at length. It must be premised, however, that from the effect of time upon the original, several words and parts of sentences are so completely obliterated as to render the meaning extremely obscure, or at best conjectural. Nevertheless, quite enough remains to render the general purport of the whole sufficiently intelligible; and we have accordingly appended a translation, as complete as the various *hiatus* referred to would admit of. We have endeavoured to preserve the character of the original as far as we could in the transcript, both in regard to the etymology and abbreviations employed, and to the signatures, which being ranged along the left margin of the original deed, will be found to occupy a relative position in our type*.

Omibs. Xti fidelibs ad quos presens Scriptum
Indentatū puenit.

Per me
Thoma Mallynge,
Prior. de Castleacre.

Thomas Prior Monasterij bete Marie de Castel-
acre in cōm Norff. alias dñs Thomas Prior domus
regularis sive prioratus bete Marie de Castelacre

* It is necessary to explain that the extraordinary specimen of Latinity here presented to the reader is a *literatim* copy of the original, the contractions, &c. being retained. It is of that peculiar class termed Norman Latin, a style *sui generis*.

ordinis clunacen Norvicen diocessis et ejusdem loci conventus saltem in Dño sempitern.

Per me
Johan (Bounhaut.)

Per me
Wiellelm Burton.

Per me
Robtm. Danyel.

Per me
Rob. Fyske.

Per me
Willm. Elis.

Novit nos p̄fat priorem et convent. unanimo assensu et consensu f̄ris animis delibat. certa scientia et mero motu f̄ris ex quibusdm causis justis et . . . nos animas et consciencias nras sp̄aliter moventibz ultro et sponte dedisse concessisse confirmasse ac per p̄sentas damus concedimus reddimus delibamus et confirmamus illustrissimo inuinctissimoque principi et dño n̄ro Henrico octavo dei gra Anglie et Francie regi Fidei defensori dño Hibern. et in terr. supremo capiti Anglicane ecclie totum dom Monastm sive prioratū firm de Castelaere p̄dca ac totum scitum fundum circuitum et poinct ejusdem Monastij n̄ri de Castelaere p̄dca neenon om̄ia et singla Mania dn̄ia Messuag. gardina curtillagia . . . terras et tēnta nra prata pascua pasturas boscos reddit rencones slutia molendina passagia Feoda milst ward maritag. escaet nativos Villanos cum eor sequelis oōies libtates franchisesias iurisdicionēs officia curtlet hundrd vis francpleg feria meat pcos Wappenna vinaria aquas piscarias vias vacuos fundos advocacōnes nōiacones p̄ntacones et dona- cōnes eccliar vicariar capellar cantiar hospitalm et alior ecclasticor bnfcior quorcumq. Rencones vicarias cantarias p̄ncones porcōnes annuitates decumas oblacōnes ac om̄ia et singla emolument pficua possessiones hereditamenta et jura nra quecumq. tam infra com. Norff. Lincoln Suff.

Essex. Midd. Cant. quam alibi infra Regnum Anglie, Wallie et . . . eorum eidm Monasterio sive Prioratui de Castelacre quoquo modo spectan concen sive tenend. et gaudend dem Monasterm sive Prioratū scitum Fundum circuitum et peinct de Castelacre pdem necnon omia et singla pdet mania dm̃a messuag gardin terras teñta ac ceta pmissa cū omibus et singulis suis membris et ptin pfato inuinctissimo principi et dmno nstro Regi hered et assignat suis nupp cui in hac pte ad om̃em juris effem qui exinde sequi potit aut potest nos et dem Monasterm sive prioratū de Castelacre pdet ac om̃ia jura nobis qualitercunq. acquisita ut decet subjeim et submittim omem et om̃iod plenam et libram facultatem auctoritatem et potestatem nos et dem Monastem sive priorat de Castelacre pdet una cū omibus et singulis Maniis terris tent reddit rensionibz sviciis et singulis cetis pmissis cum suis iuribz et ptin quibuscunq. disponend ac per suo libr Reg voluntatis libitz ad quoscunq. usus maiestati sue placentes alienand donand comittend et tnslatand huiusmodi disposicones alienacones dona comiscones tnslacōnes prdem maiestatem suam quovis modo fiend nat et grat ac ppetus firmas per psentes Et ut principa om̃ia et singla suum debit sortiri valeant effem elecionibz nobis et successoribz nris necnon omibz querelis prvocacionibz appella- cion litibz accion ibinstanciis aliisq. quibuscunq. iuris remediis et bnficiis nobis forsen et successoribz nris

Per me
Johan Bets.

Per me
Edwardū Wadnowe.

Per me
Joh̃ne Low.

Per me
Robertū Fadre.

Per me
Robtū Salman.

in ea pte ptextu disposiconis alienaconis tnstaconis
 et comissionis pdict et ceter prmissos qualitercunq.
 competentibz et competituris omibz doli erroris
 metus ignorancie vel alicujz nature sive disposiconis
 excepcionibz obiectionibz et allegacionibz prorsus
 semotis et depositis palam publice et expresse ac
 nri scientia animisq spontaneis Renun-
 ciavim et cessim per psentes Renunciam
 et cedim et ab iisdem Recedimus in his Scriptis.
 Et nos pdict prior et conventus et successores nri
 Monastm sive priorat. de Castelacre ac omia et
 singla mania dmia mes. gardina curtillag testa
 prata pascua pasturas boscos subboscos teras tenta
 ac omia et singula ceta pmissa eidem suis membris
 et ptm universis pfato dno nro Regi hered et
 assignat suis contra omnes gentes Warrentizzab.
 per psentes.

In quar. Rer. testimonium nos pfat. Prior et
 conventus utiq pti hor. scriptor. nrer Indentat.
 sigillum frm commune apponi fecimus dat. vicesimo
 scdo die Novembris anno regni pdoi dni Regis
 invic. vicesimo nono.

TRANSLATION.

To all faithful Christians to whom the present written Indenture
 may come. Thomas, Prior of the Monastery of the blessed Mary
 of Castleacre in the county of Norfolk, otherwise Sir * Thomas,

* *Dominus*—Sir. The usual prefix to graduates of the Universities
 and to the clergy generally; whence the *Sir* Hugh (*Dominus* Hugh), of
 Shakespeare and others.

Prior of the regular house or priory of the blessed Mary of Castleacre, of the Cluniac order, in the diocese of Norwich, and the chapter of the same place,—Eternal health in the Lord.

Be it known that we, the aforesaid Prior and Chapter, with unanimous assent and consent, having deliberated in our minds, with sure knowledge and a pure motive, certain just and reasonable causes specially moving our souls and consciences thereunto, willingly and spontaneously have given, yielded, confirmed, and by these presents do give, yield, deliver, grant, and confirm, to the most illustrious and invincible Prince and our sovereign Lord, Henry the Eighth, by the grace of God, King of England and France, Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland, and upon earth supreme head of the English church, all the said our Monastery or Priory of Castleacre aforesaid, and all the site, foundation, surrounding land and precinct of the same our monastery of Castleacre aforesaid,—besides all and every the manors, domains, messuages, gardens, covered buildings, lands and tenements, our meadows, grazing grounds, pasturages, woods, rents, revenues, water-mills, passages, feofs, wardships native villeins, with their (lineal descendants!) liberties, franchises, jurisdictions, offices, curtlets, frankpledges, hunting grounds, cattle, wappentakes, cellars, fisheries, roads, waste grounds,—the advowsons, nominations, presentations, and donations, of the churches, vicarages, chapelries, chantries, hospitals, and of the other ecclesiastical benefices whatsoever; the rectories, vicarages, chapelries, chantries, pensions, rates, annuities, tithes, and all and every our emoluments, possessions, hereditaments, and rights whatsoever, as well within the counties of Norfolk, Lincoln, Suffolk, Essex, Middlesex, Cambridge, as elsewhere within the kingdoms of England, Wales, and of those things in any way belonging, concerning,

appending to or depending upon the said Monastery or Priory of Castleacre; and all our deeds, evidences, writings, and muniments, belonging to the said Monastery or Priory, its manors, lands, tenements, and privileges whatsoever; or to every other peculiar in any way pertaining, held, or enjoyed by the said Monastery or Priory, the aforesaid site, foundation, surrounding land, and precinct of Castleacre; besides all and every the aforesaid manors, demesnes, messuages, gardens, lands, tenements, and other privileges belonging to all and every its members and things belonging to our aforesaid invincible prince and lord the King, his heirs and assigns (lawfully authorized); to whom by law in this behalf we apprise whosoever henceforth can or may follow us,—the said Monastery or aforesaid Priory of Castleacre, and all the rights, howsoever acquired by us, as it behoves we convey and cede all and altogether, full and free liberty, authority, and power, ourselves, and the said Monastery or Priory of Castleacre aforesaid, with all and every the manors, lands, tenements, rents, revenues, services, and every other the privileges with the rights and appurtenances thereunto belonging and whatever can be disposed of, to the King, to whatever use may please his Majesty, to be alienated, given, entrusted, and transferred,—the disposals, alienations, gifts, commissions, translations of this kind to be done, in whatever manner his aforesaid Majesty (may think fit). . . . And that all and every these privileges may avail to be held as his due, we cause our determination (to be respected), by us and by our successors, apart from all quarrels, provocations, appeals, litigations, actions, suits, and such like whatsoever; with remedies and immunities of law by us and our successors in this behalf from any pretext of disposal, alienation, translation, and commission aforesaid, &c., the privileges whatsoever agreed upon at this time, or to be agreed

upon, all exceptions, objections, and allegations of fraud, errors, fear, ignorance, or any other nature or disposition, being altogether removed, and openly, publicly, and expressly set aside. . . .

With deliberation and voluntary inclination we have renounced and yielded, and by these presents we do renounce and yield up, and by the same we deliver (them) in these writings. And we, the aforesaid Prior and Chapter and our successors, by these presents, have warranted (for ever) the Monastery or Priory of Castleacre, and all and every its manors, demesnes, messuages, gardens, covered buildings, meadows, grazing grounds, pastures, woods, underwoods, lands, tenements, and all and every the other privileges, with all its members and appurtenances, to our aforesaid lord the King, his heirs and assigns, against all people.

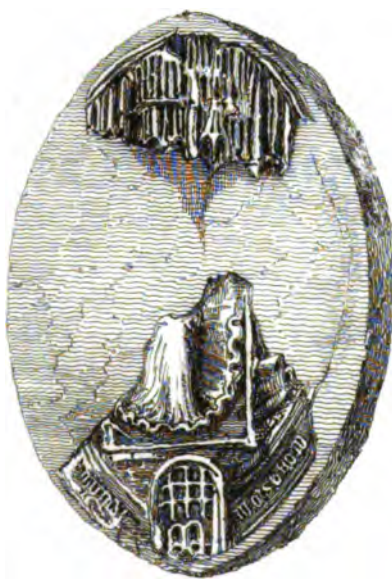
In testimony of which things, we, the aforesaid Prior and Chapter, to each part of these our indentured writings have caused our common seal to be appended. Given on the twenty-second day of November, in the twenty-ninth year of the reign of our aforesaid invincible King.

The "common seal" affixed to this document, and of which a representation is given in another place, is of an oval form, but unfortunately much defaced. Enough, however, remains to show that the device represented the figure of the Virgin standing under a canopy of rich shrine-work, the figure being surrounded by a radiated nimbus. Beneath her feet is part of the wall and gate of a castle, with the portcullis partially raised; the monogram of Maria appearing immediately within. The inscription is wholly illegible. The smaller, or Prior's

Fig.
2



Fig.
1



Etched by H. Nisbham from a Drawing by C. Wright.

CONVENTUAL SEALS, CASTLEACRE.

seal, of this foundation, represents a full-length figure of the Virgin seated, in high relief; the inscription, however, being much defaced.

From the above deed it will be seen how complete, sweeping, and entire was the surrender which these monasteries were required to make of their long-cherished and venerated rights and privileges. Taking the specimen before us as a sample of the whole, we may judge how sordid and tyrannous was the spirit in which the King exercised a power suggested by his own arbitrary caprice, and authorised to him by a cringing and obsequious Parliament. And what did he offer in exchange,—what shadow of compensation did he make, for the indiscriminate spoliation which he thought fit to indulge? Not a syllable is said on the subject! Not a hint transpires save the vague and general admission of “certain just and reasonable causes moving them thereunto!” *Reasonable*, forsooth! They had promises, perhaps,—fair specious promises in plenty, and some trifling pension might fall to the share of the most forward in the work of cession; but what became of the great bulk of the men who were thus abruptly and unceremoniously unhoused and beggared?

The surrender was acted upon without loss of time.

The commissioners compiled their inventory with the most scrupulous exactness ; not an article, however insignificant, of the least apparent value, or that could by any means be converted into coin, escaped their scrutiny. Crosses, chalices, patens, censers, candlesticks, the costly trappings of the various altars, the rich robes of the officiating priests, the elaborate adornments of the shrines, the sonorous peal of bells, the lead which roofed the church and adjacent buildings, the varied paintings on the storied windows, the massy timbers of the roof, down to the very pigs of metal reserved for occasional repairs,—were all collected together, examined, weighed, valued, and returned, to be disposed of in the readiest, and most advantageous manner. Goods, chattels, crops, stock, and moveables of all descriptions, old iron, glass, and stone, were as far as possible disposed of on the spot, and the amount so raised, together with whatever moneys might be in the possession of the Chapter at the time of the surrender, besides the arrears of all rents due to the foundation, were transmitted, as early as might be, to “the court of Augmentation of the revenues of the King’s crowne,” the destined bourne of all this heartless spoliation. The Cluniacs of Acre, for a time at least, were homeless.

What a change had a few short weeks wrought in the fortunes of a once flourishing community ! Altars that had blazed with jewellery and plate, naked, cold, and mutilated ; shrines that had sparkled night and day with a hundred votive tapers, dark, dismal, and unheeded ; bells that had flung their mellow chime far and wide, in sorrow or in gladness, broken and destroyed ; the massy grey towers which for centuries had formed so prominent a feature in the surrounding landscape, roofless to the winds and storms ; cloisters that had echoed to the measured tread of anxious devotees, silent and deserted ! The lowly hind, following his customary vocation in the neighbouring fields, from the mere impulse of habit, would pause in his employ to catch the wonted tone of the shrill sacring bell, but pause in vain ; the familiar sound was hushed for ever. The way-worn mendicant would seek the shelter and relief never withheld by the good brethren of the almonry ; no voice responded to the meek appeal, no dish of broken meats rejoiced his eager gaze. The very air was tainted with a living desolation, and the blasts of winter howled and eddied the pæan of triumphing ruin !

During the space of ten years the Crown retained possession of the surrendered lands, when, having exhausted

the cream of the various revenues, they were dispersed among different proprietors as the most eligible purchasers offered.

The Priory, with its immediate lands and manors, passed into the hands of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, who was already in possession of the Castle with its dependencies. Thenceforth the respective properties centred in the person of one proprietor, and following the succession already detailed in our Historical Notices of the Castle, came into the family of the noble individual who now holds them. Ruin equally marks the site of baronial hall and cloistered cell, but fertile harvests wave in all directions on the surrounding lands, and could the poor Cluniacs of Acre have anticipated in their day the goodly produce which now annually attests the combined triumph of skill, capital, and liberality, they would have found their revenues, ample as they were, doubled in value and extent.

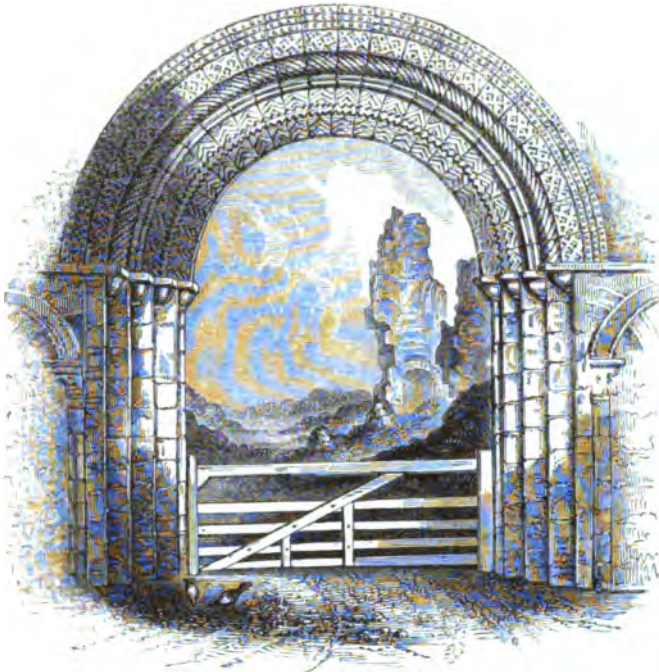
We cannot close our sketch of the career of this interesting foundation without briefly adverting to the general pursuits of its former inmates.

Of these we can only speak by conjecture. With one solitary exception, to be noticed in another place, there

is nothing extant to attest the skill or learning of the monks of Acre. It cannot boast of its Matthew Paris or its William of Malmesbury, and yet it is reasonable to suppose that it could not be wholly destitute of talent. It had its library, and such learning as the period could claim was doubtless cultivated within its walls. Few establishments of the kind but had their school, where the instruction of youth was exercised as a duty, and where the high-born and the lowly alike experienced the tender solicitude of their instructors. The revival of letters obtained in Continental Europe some short time prior to the Conquest, and in reviewing the character of the Conqueror we should not overlook the fact that by his munificence and personal example he endeavoured in every way to promote their cultivation in this land. The monasteries were for a long period the only suitable retreats of resuscitated literature, and it is only justice to the monastics to say that they fostered and cherished it with exemplary fidelity. It is this very fact which attaches so much interest to the spots now and for a long series of years destitute of claim upon our respect, and we cannot look at humble and obscure Acre without reflecting that it has borne its share in the goodly work. Science and the fine arts had also their votaries

matters were not neglected or suffered to lie dormant ; so that, whatever may be urged, and with justice, against the too prevalent character of monastic institutions, we cannot withhold from them the meed of commendation, as the faithful guardians of all that now so greatly contributes to the delight and relaxation of civilised life. Whilst the various classes of society around them were plunged in the tumultuous distractions of a rude, stern, uncompromising age, or sunk in the debasing trammels of an ignorant and hopeless servitude, the peaceful inmates of the cloisters “ held on the even tenor of their way ” in uninterrupted security, calmly fulfilling their pious and benevolent calling, and cherishing the feeble flame of knowledge which was not to flood its light upon the world until the hands that had so fostered it were mingled with the past.

Let it be considered, then, that the Priory of Acre has contributed its share to this important work, as a humble nursery of neglected and well-nigh forgotten science, and it immediately becomes invested with an interest to which, perhaps, in the opinion of many, its shapeless and scattered ruins can otherwise possess no claim.



WEST DOOR OF THE PRIORY CHURCH.

THE PRIORY.

EXISTING REMAINS.

. . . . The earth where abbeyes stood
Is layman's land ;—the glebe, the stream, the wood ;
His oxen low where monks retired to eat,
His cows repose upon the prior's seat ;
And wanton doves within the cloisters bill,
Where the chaste votary warr'd with wanton will.

THE BOROUGH, Letter iv.



NE is tempted almost to believe that the gentle-hearted Crabbe had penned these lines under the vivid impression of a recent visit to Castleacre, so faithfully true are they to the existing condition of its venerable Priory. Here, indeed, it is matter of

frequent observation that " oxen low where monks retired to eat," and here too, oftentimes, in the bright and balmy days of summer may be seen a happy group of joyous faces clustering eagerly round a well-stored cloth of snowy whiteness spread on the fresh herbage, and watching with merry malice the abstraction of a distant sketcher from their party intent upon transferring yon fantastic pier in crayons or in pencil, whilst flocks of " wanton doves " whirr and whirl overhead until they again find rest from their mazy flight in the secure lodgment of the western tower of the conventual church. Can they be conscious of the proximity of some of their less fortunate mates, whose plump and well-seasoned bodies are immured within the inviting precincts of that capacious pie ? For here, within the shattered boundary of the ample refectory, we perceive substantial symptoms of good cheer ; no black beans and salt indeed, but pasties, capons, hams, tongues, and eke champagne, nectar unknown to the poor hunger-pinched Cluniac ! There are pilgrims too, but very merry ones, and a thrilling laugh, which ever and anon echoes from some distant angle of the ruin, indicates the presence of most youthful votaries, whilst the more sedate of the party lounge in indolent ease upon the green sward, occupied in social converse, or rapt in silent contemplation of the

by-gone glories of the neighbouring fane. A thin pungent vapour, redolent of Virginia, wreathes at intervals into the still evening air, but it breathes not frankincense ! How changed the scene from that remote period when no foot trod the cloistered courts save that of the pale ascetic, or that perchance of the privileged stranger whom business, or the call of hospitality, had brought within the walls !

It is satisfactory to know, that in the dispersed, and apparently confused, masses of time-worn ruin which here meet our view, we have before us one of the most interesting and complete remains of monastic institutions which this country can furnish. The ground-plan is nearly entire throughout, and the details, upon examination, are found to supply a competent idea of the arrangements usually adopted in such establishments ; whilst the wealth and importance formerly attached to this foundation, lead to the reasonable inference that it affords a fair type of the general character of the class to which it belongs.

The Priory is situated within little more than a quarter of a mile from the Castle Keep, from whence it still forms a prominent and agreeable feature in the landscape. The precincts occupy a space of ground in

extent about thirty-six acres, originally surrounded throughout by a substantial wall of rough compact flint, of which considerable traces are still discernible to the north and east. Indeed its course may be remarked with tolerable distinctness throughout the greater part of the extent, running parallel with the western wall of the modern churchyard, and bending at an abrupt angle on the margin of the stream to the south, which here divides it from an adjoining parish. The area comprised within this boundary, of which but a small portion is under cultivation, the remainder being rich pasture land, was in part occupied by the conventual buildings of the foundation, and such appurtenances as were necessary to the comfort and relaxation of its inmates. Cemetery, garden, stew-ponds, and dairy-walk were here, the presumed localities of which will be more minutely noticed hereafter, whilst the only entrance to the precinct being to the north, immediately within the observation of the good superior of the establishment, who at a glance could become cognisant of every exit and entry from and to the premises, secured an ample share of privacy without impressing the fraternity with the unwelcome idea of compulsory restraint.

We approach the Priory, then, from the north, and on

the summit of the rising ground from whence we dip, as it were, into the inclosure, at its north-eastern corner we obtain the pretty bird's-eye glance at the ruins which is so happily conveyed in our illustration at the head of the preceding section. The principal, and once the only, entrance to the precinct is by a Gate-house or Lodge, faithfully represented in the accompanying sketch, through the main archway of which we catch a view of the western extremity of the conventual church, with its adjoining lodge, the private residence of the Prior.

This Gate-house, placed at a distance of about one hundred and thirty yards from the north-west angle of the church, was rebuilt on the site of an older and smaller structure, in the time of Henry VII., at the same period with several extensive repairs in the Priory itself. The style of architecture at once declares its origin, and the counterpart of the edifice must be familiar to all who have noticed the greater part of the college gateways at Oxford and Cambridge, particularly those of St. John's and Queen's Colleges in the latter university. To such a one it will be no difficult matter to re-embody the kindred structure before us, and indeed, the lateral walls remaining in a very sound and nearly perfect state,

its restoration as a dwelling might be effected at a trifling cost, and if executed with judgment would have a pleasing and appropriate effect.

The façade consists of two arched entrances, flanked and surmounted by the windows of the porter's dwelling. The principal or carriage entrance, as we may distinguish it, being constructed for the passage of vehicles of that description and horsemen, occupies the immediate centre, presenting a road-way upwards of eleven feet in width; to the left of the entrance, as the spectator views it, a lesser archway, four feet nine inches wide, furnishes a convenient and secure mode of entry and regress to foot-passengers, contiguous to, but apart from the hazard and inconvenience of the public road. These two pathways blend, as it were, into one within the gateway, by means of an open archway corresponding in dimensions with the outer or carriage entrance. The entrances fronting the high-road were closed at pleasure by stout oaken doors, of which the iron pivots still remain: their corresponding archways on the priory side were not similarly secured, but open, as now, at all hours of the night or day.

To the left of the entrance is the Porter's Lodge, a small apartment, having in one corner a spacious hearth and

chimney, and two or three niches somewhat resembling piscinæ in form. This apartment was separated from the footway by a thin partition, of which traces remain on the stucco of the lateral walls. Opposite to this, on the other side of the carriage-way, was a small chamber lighted by two windows; and adjoining to it, at the south-western angle, was a good staircase of hard brick, conducting to the sleeping apartments, two in number, each lighted by four windows, with a narrow passage of communication on the southern side of the wall.

The south front of the Gate-house is entirely plain, but on the northern or principal façade, there are five shields of armorial bearings well executed in stone, and still retaining their respective devices with sharp distinctness. These shields are disposed upon the building as in the illustration, and have been separately delineated in preceding portions of our work; although, as this is the proper locality to which they belong, it will be necessary again briefly to notice them. The shield in the centre, over the apex of the principal archway, presents the armorial bearings of De Warrenne, the munificent founder (*vide ante*, page 33); that on the extreme right, the device of John Fitzalan, Lord Maltravers (*ante*, page 99); that on the left of the centre, the arms of England, tempore

Henry V.; and that to the extreme left, the armorial bearings of Arundel (ante, page 33). Immediately above the crown of the footway arch rests the armorial bearing of the Priory itself (ante, page 121).

Upon the whole, though interesting in its way, it must be admitted that this Gatehouse is sadly deficient in keeping with the beautiful ruin to which it conducts. The term "stately," which Blomefield applies to it, is strangely misapplied; and it sinks into complete insignificance, when reserved by visitors as the last object of examination, as too generally happens. The main point of curiosity is the admirable manner in which a hard red brick, moulded with considerable skill to the shape required, has been employed in the construction of the quoins, buttresses, window-frames, and hoods, to the complete exclusion of stone. No flaking appears in any part of the compact outline, notwithstanding neglect, the lapse of time, and the exposure to climate through so long an interval.

Passing down the steep declivity from the Gatehouse, until we near the modern buildings of the Priory Farm, and facing to the east, we pause before the west front of the conventual Church, from the south-western angle of which the Prior's Lodge immediately abuts. Our frontis-

piece will afford some idea of the objects which here meet our view, although it is scarcely possible for the pencil to convey the impression which a first glance at this beautiful façade is calculated to make upon the mind. With the antiquary the sentiment expressed is uniformly that of admiration: the least interested in such pursuits fail not to remark the grace which a happy combination of simplicity and rich decoration succeed in producing. We contemplate a structure over which the storms of seven centuries have passed, with a lenity that speaks volumes in behalf of the solidity of its construction, as well as the durability of its material. There is a freshness about the whole which might well-nigh induce us to doubt whether this be not the production of a later age, instead of being, as in truth it is, a remnant of the skill and judgment with which architects laboured in their vocation, when the Red King swayed the sceptre of the realm. Time has lightly done his allotted work, and but for the ruthless hand of spoliation and wanton dilapidation, which have been so mercilessly exercised upon other parts of this noble foundation, we might have had present to our view, not a western frontage only, but an entire edifice nearly in its original state. Desirable as it would be, in many respects, to contemplate the

structure complete in all its original freshness, we confess to a predilection in favour of our pretty ruin : for the attention which is now concentrated on some scattered relic of early art, would necessarily be diminished by dispersion over an ampler range of observation ; whilst in its present state imagination may exercise both taste and ingenuity in giving form and substance to the wide-spreading masses around. It is at least a pleasing exercise for the fancy ; but in order to direct it aright, we must enter the consecrated precincts with something of a warm feeling of art, and a determination to assign to every part its due weight, and importance, and propriety, in the scale of our mental restoration. We shall be at no loss to realise the picture ; a fragment here, an enrichment there, an entablature in one place, and intersecting arches in another,—occur in every quarter to assist us in the work ; and thus “in our mind’s eye” we may embody the vast skeleton into one consistent and harmonious whole.

THE WESTERN FRONT,

however, claims our first attention. With one exception, all is Norman—pure, stern, massy—still not heavy Norman. The central door-way, opening into the nave [A],

with its semicircular arch of bold and varied moulding; the smaller entrances on either side [B, C], leading respectively to the north and south aisles, having their arches in like manner, though dissimilarly, ornamented; the tiers of blind arches, interlacing and simple, covering the intervening spaces, and rising to the summit of the remain; the fantastic corbels and metopes, all bearing the distinctive impress of Norman work,—produce a combination, the harmonious arrangement of which can only be appreciated fully on personal inspection. Our illustration will serve to show the general effect of the front; but a separate drawing of the central arch is given at the head of this section, in order more clearly to point out the simple and pleasing style of ornament employed in its decoration.

An ingenious idea has been somewhere suggested, and has, we believe, obtained among several of the curious in such speculations, that the various mouldings and decorative enrichments which are so profusely dispersed over most of our ecclesiastical edifices, have not been so distributed at the mere fancy or caprice of the builders, but have all a symbolical or latent meaning allusive to some matter of faith, or doctrine, or tradition, in connection with the Church. We shall not pause for an elabo-

rate examination into the merits of such a theory, if it can be called one ; indeed we only touch upon the subject to show how it may be applied to interpret some of the decorations in the structure before us, and it is left to the discretion of the reader to adopt or reject the speculation as he may judge most fit. How far the conceit can be borne out by evidence it is not for us to determine, but at least it is not devoid of ingenuity.

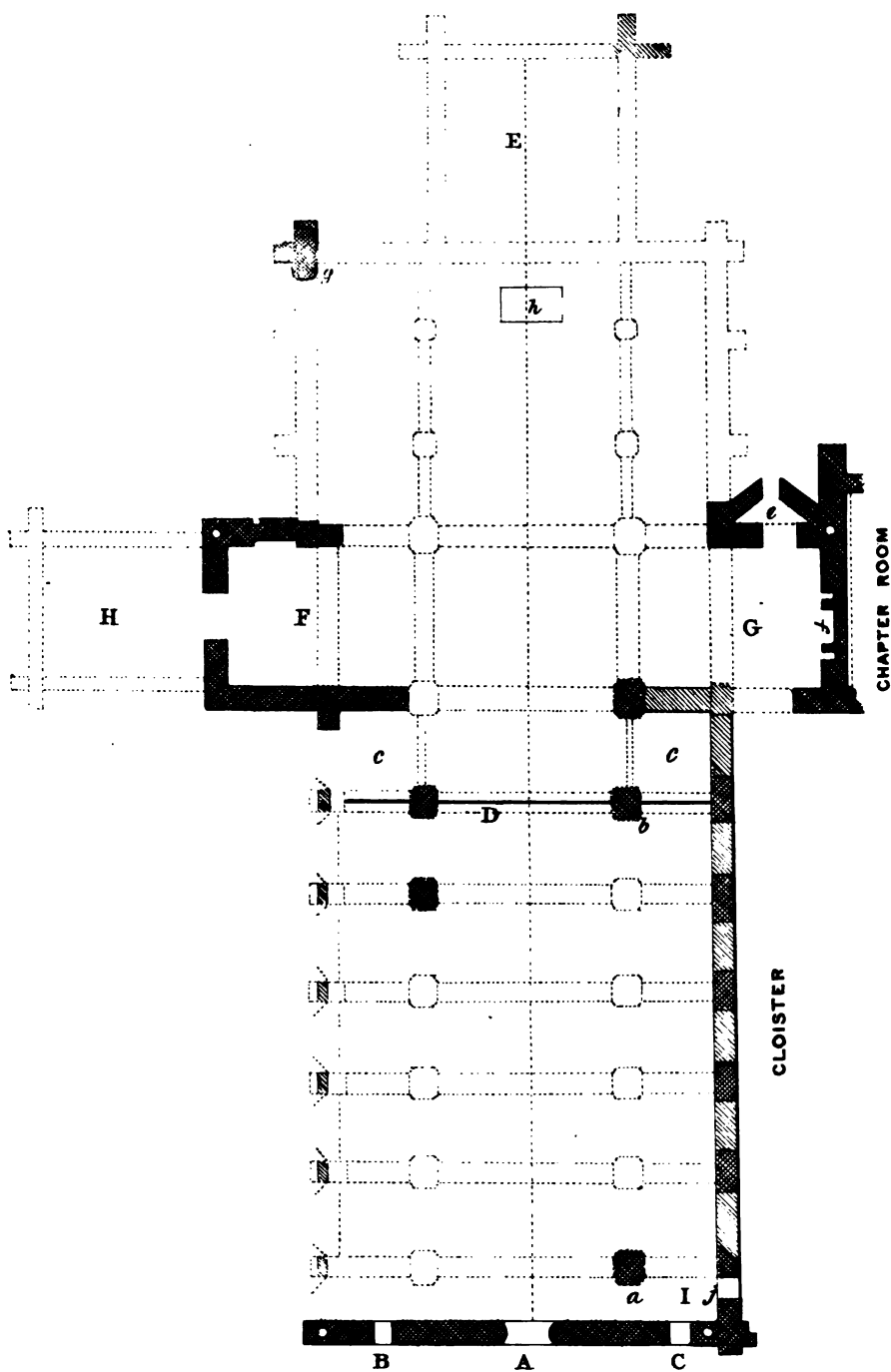
For example, the zig-zag or chevron moulding, which forms so conspicuous a feature in the decoration of the doorways and arches of the nave, and other parts, may be supposed to have some reference to the rays or nimbus which usually encircle the heads of saints or angels in old paintings and illuminations, and thus to indicate *Glory*. The chain of large balls or beads will serve to represent the rosary, an important adjunct of Roman Catholic worship, indicating *Prayer* ; the bold twisted cable appropriately enough symbolises *Union* and *Strength*, the prominent features of an Apostolic Church. Three arches interlaced in one pannel, and under one common hood or canopy, will indicate *the Trinity* ; while a group of six arches, similarly interlaced, on either side a doorway or window, fitly represents the number of the

Apostles. In like manner four arches, similarly connected, will point out the number of the Evangelists; whilst a chain of such arcades, carried on in unbroken succession over the façade of a building of this class, will frequently be found to correspond in number with Christ, the Apostles, and Evangelists, or with that of the Seventy commissioned by Him as the early ministers of his Church. Thus, as the general form of the edifice had reference to the Cross, so its leading decorations were studiously arranged in harmony with the idea, and were meant to symbolise some point of revelation or of tradition in connexion with it. Whatever may be thought of the matter as applied to the decorations in question, it is certain that the capitals of columns were frequently adorned with some rude sculpture, intended to represent the leading events recorded in Holy Writ, such as the Fall, the Deluge, the trial of Abraham, &c. There are indications of this in the façade of our Priory, but so defaced that it is extremely difficult to individualise the subjects.

In speaking of the pure and bold Norman character of this elegant façade, we observed that there was one exception to be remarked. It is to be found in the pointed window which surmounts the central archway.

This, beautiful in its kind, and conspicuous for the symmetrical perfection of its proportions, is, nevertheless, sadly out of place in its present position, and manifestly an interpolation of later date. This is palpable at once to the slightest observation, from the evident interruption that it has occasioned in the tracery of arches which still flank the window on either side, and which formerly extended completely across this part of the building. In fact, originally there was no window of any kind whatever in this part, such being the usual character of severe Norman style, and the façade presented one uniform frontage of arches, columns, mouldings, and tracery. It was not until the growing taste for the pointed arch, and the passion for western windows to our churches began to prevail, that the worthy fraternity of this establishment were tempted to admit the incongruous interpolation. It is satisfactory, however, to reflect that the window in question is by no means so disproportionate to the general plan as too frequently happens in the case of similar addenda. The extraordinary beauty of the outline that remains is sufficient to justify the care that is bestowed in its preservation.

It will be observed that the upper part of the southern



THE CONVENTUAL CHURCH OF CASTLEACRE.

tower has on each of its sides two sharply pointed arches or lancets. These may undoubtedly be referred to the period when such arches, preceding the regular pointed style, came into use ; that is to say, within a very few years prior to the consecration of this edifice by Bishop Turbus, in A.D. 1148, at which time this portion of the building was completed. The corresponding tower at the northern extremity of the front, now entirely demolished to the very foundation, was doubtless similarly constructed and adorned, and there is reason to suppose that both were originally higher by one or two tiers of arches.

We will now proceed to enter within the consecrated area of the Conventual Church ; and here, to assist the examination, reference must be made to the accompanying plan.

THE CONVENTUAL CHURCH.

It will be seen that the general plan of the Church is cruciform,—part of the choir, with the transepts, forming the upper portion of the cross,—the nave, with its side aisles, constituting the shaft.

The interior proportions of the edifice will be found to correspond with the following measurements :—

	FEET.	INCHES.
Total length from the west entrance to the wall of the Lady Chapel [E] at the back of the high altar	226	0
Length of the nave, from the west door to the screen [D]	90	0
Length from the screen to the back of the altar, as before	136	0
Breadth of the nave, with side aisles	59	6
Breadth across the transepts	99	6

Upon entering through the archway [A], and turning to examine its interior plan, it will be found to present a construction altogether different from its external appearance. It is, in fact, a *double* arch, ingeniously contrived, but producing an effect far more curious than agreeable. It should be noticed that the soil, which has accumulated in some slight degree on the exterior façade of the building, is actually accumulated to a much greater extent in the interior, in some parts very considerably so, and that originally the passenger *descended* to the pavement of the church, from the respective entrances, down four or more steps; as is the case to this day upon entering the cathedral church of Norwich, to

which, in general arrangement, the present structure, on a diminished scale, bears considerable resemblance.

The pavement throughout the building consisted of small square red tile, neatly and compactly laid, and for the most part perfectly plain; embossed, or intaglio, pavement being of very rare occurrence in this portion of the ruins. Wherever we have cleared a space to the floor of the church, and the spots have been varied and numerous, we have uniformly exposed the small plain pavement referred to, in a greater or less degree of preservation.

Advancing from the west door along the centre of the nave, we find that there were six massy piers on either side connecting it, by means of noble and richly decorated archways, with the north and south aisles respectively. Of these arches, all that retains its original casing of stone, or that can serve to indicate the style of decoration which was carried forward through this portion of the building, is that upon which the south-western tower rests, and which fortunately continues in a good state of preservation [*a*]. As we shall return presently to a more minute notice of this locality, we will now direct attention to the sixth pier from the entrance, and its corresponding one on the opposite side [*b*]. Upon clear-

ing away the rubbish and fallen ruin from the south pier in this quarter, we ascertained that a massy screen, and possibly rood-loft, extended from side to side across the nave and aisles, resting in either direction against the piers referred to. Of what material the screen might be it is impossible to determine, but the fact of its existence is clearly shown by the broad deep grooves prepared on the basement of the pier for the reception of the framework. Here, then, the nave may be said to terminate; the remaining space, as far as the Lady Chapel at the extremity, being properly the choir. Before, however, we enter upon this department of the building, a curious fact remains to be noticed, which has been brought to light by the excavation already alluded to. From a cursory glance at the remains it might reasonably be concluded that the north and south aisles were carried forward uninterruptedly into the transepts, or with the mere intervention of the screen referred to; but such was not the case. The aisles were respectively terminated in this quarter by a thin though substantial wall, against which rested a small altar, raised a few inches from the regular pavement of the church, and flanked on either side by a painted sellium or confessional, the frame-work of which had disappeared. Thus, with the

screen in front of each, these small spaces constituted distinct chapels [*c. c.*], and doubtless were so considered. The oblong space upon which the altar rested was paved with small tiles, neatly painted in eccentric devices, the colours being burnt in, but without any appearance of embossment or intaglio. It is to be regretted that these traces are no longer to be recognised; exposure to the air caused a rapid exfoliation of the material of the wall, and the reprehensible curiosity of visitors accelerated its complete destruction.

THE CHOIR AND TRANSEPTS.

A FEW feet beyond the screen we enter the space between the transepts. Of four massy piers which here supported the low central tower, always found in Norman structures of the kind, one only rises to a considerable height above the fallen ruin; this is the pier marked [*d.*] in the plan. It presents a huge mass of irregular solid masonry, strikingly significant of the bulk and dimensions of the tower it helped to support. The exterior casing of stone has long since disappeared, and the hand of the spoiler is but too apparent in this spot as well as in the remainder of the choir. In all proba-

bility the basements of the remaining piers, if uncovered, would be found in nearly a perfect state, whilst their dimensions far exceed those of their predecessors in the nave. Standing in the midst, between the basements of the piers of the central towers facing eastward, we have behind us the range of the nave and side aisles; immediately in front, the choir with its side chapels; and on either hand, the north and south transepts. With the exception of the latter, the ruin is so complete that little remains to indicate the form and dimensions of the building, but a ground outline just discernible above the soil. It is fortunate, however, that the walls of the transepts, with the exception of the upper part, are all standing; and as the superincumbent mass of rubbish has been removed in one or two places down to the original pavement—standing thereupon, the visitor may form a tolerable idea of the noble elevation of the pile, which here ran upward to the roof, unbroken by any intermediate vaulting, and possessing arcades, tracery, and a beautiful succession of arches and moulding rising to the summit.

Directing our attention, in the first instance, to the south transept [G], we observe its eastern side to be occupied by an apsis or semicircular chapel [*e*], a con-

trivance of frequent occurrence in Norman edifices. It has a vaulted roof, an east window, a small altar beneath it, a piscina to the south of the altar, and there are indications of a screen, or railing, on the west side, communicating with the transept. In the corner immediately adjacent to the apsis is a stair-case conducting to the arcades in this direction, and on the southern wall of the transept is a deep arched recess, formerly most probably containing an altar tomb [*f*], and flanked on each side by a distinct ambry or safe, for the secure deposit of the vessels and accessories used in the service of the altar. The appropriation of these ambries to such a purpose can only be matter of conjecture, since every trace of stone-work, except a small portion in the lower part of the ambry, adjacent to the south-west angle of the transept, where it has the appearance of a drain, has been entirely picked away; from which circumstance, we suppose this shrine or tomb to have been highly ornamented, and its decorations deemed of sufficient value to swell the coffers of the Court of Augmentations. The western wall of the transept seems to have been for the greater part solid, although it was long supposed that an arched entrance to the church, from the adjacent cloister, existed in this quarter. An excavation, however, has

proved that the supposed entrance was, in fact, nothing more than a recessed lavatory on the side of the cloister, through the back wall of which an opening has been forced into the transept by some of the early spoliators of the fane. Immediately contiguous to this forced passage, and partly destroyed by it, within the transept, there is a slightly curved depression in the even surface of the walls—it is scarcely deep enough to be called a recess—which presents the singular appearance of an early English window traced with a pointed instrument upon the stucco while the cement was moist, and still exhibiting evident traces of the colouring with which it was adorned. Exposure to the weather, however, is now rapidly obliterating all trace of this contrivance, the purport of which it is in vain to conjecture.

Crossing over to the opposite or northern transept [F], we find the same general architectural arrangements observed as in the one we have just quitted, although the basement details are somewhat different. In the centre of the northern wall, a lofty arched entrance conducts to an apartment of which even the outline scarcely remains, and to which access was had from the pavement of the church, by means of six stone steps embedded in the thickness of the wall. The apartment to which they

conducted is reasonably supposed to have been the sacristy [H]; and there are traces of a low chamber over it, the use of which is not clearly apparent. To the left of the door-way, and in the north-east angle of the transept, is a stair-case leading to the arcades, wherein may be seen the remarkably preserved date which so completely determines the period of the foundation of the establishment, and to which reference has already been made (ante, page 126). On the east side is a lofty and deep arched recess, formerly containing an altar tomb, probably of one of the De Warrenne family, or of some munificent benefactor to the foundation, as, upon examination of the spot, some few years since, a skeleton was disclosed immediately in the centre of the compartment. It has been thought that this might possibly be the resting-place of the founder himself, but many considerations lead to the conclusion that he was not interred within these precincts. The western side of the transept seems to have been perfectly plain and unbroken throughout.

Quitting the transepts, we pace the remaining portion of the choir to the small Ladye Chapel at the back of the high altar [E]. The remains in this direction are extremely scanty; but from the angle still remaining

at [g], and the general outline of the ground plan, it is obvious that this portion of the church has been rebuilt at a much later period than the preceding part. Originally, doubtless, the entire choir was constructed in unison with the rest of the building, and was terminated with a semicircular end, as usual in Norman structures of this class: at what period the change was made to its present form, or what the occasion which rendered the alteration necessary, there is no evidence to show. Pausing on the probable site of the high altar [h], and facing to the west, we trace the whole cruciform outline of the edifice, which, in its original freshness of tracery, arcades, and enrichments, must have presented an object of great elegance from this quarter, although the grandeur and vast proportion which characterise the greater part of our cathedrals might be wanting.

Retracing our steps through the length of the church, our attention is caught by the appearance of the southwestern tower [I], which, from the comparative preservation of its leading features, enables us to judge of the character of the architectural embellishments which pervaded the nave, and were carried, more or less, through the entire building. The basement of the tower consists of two main arches, the one communicating with the

nave, immediately on the right of a person entering by the great door; the other, at right angles, opening into the south aisle. On the south side is a small arched doorway communicating with the cloister [*j*]; in the adjoining angle a stone stair conducts to the upper part of the tower, and to the prior's private apartments; and on the west side is the entrance from the front [C].

The whole of this area was, for a great length of time, inclosed by rough modern masonry, as a receptacle for coals, &c., until of late years, when the good taste of the present occupier has been evinced in the removal of all extraneous matter. From the appearance of the archivaults, we suppose them to have once been coated with a firm composition resembling stone, that might have continued perfect until now but for the rude purposes to which the area has been applied. Had the archivaults been faced with stone, there is no reason why it should not have been apparent at this time, since the adjacent stonework remains compact and uninjured, and the greater part of the tower has luckily escaped the hand of the spoliator. It will be remarked that the appearance of the arch bears the stamp of solidity, combined with an airiness not often to be recognised in Norman work;

the form is of that peculiar description known as the stilted arch, though not to a disproportionate extent; and the graceful employment of the chevron ornament imparts at once a relief and richness which, in the complete state of the nave, must have had a strikingly elegant effect.*

Before we pass from the consecrated precinct, to notice the domestic details of the establishment, a word or two is necessary with regard to the various excavations which, from time to time, have been made in this portion of the ruin.

It is reasonable to conclude, that, could a complete clearance of the area of the church be effected, many little matters of much interest to the antiquary would be disclosed. The work, however, would be one of considerable labour and difficulty. The prodigious quantity of fallen ruin and accumulated rubbish which covers every part of the pavement—in some places to the perpendicular depth of ten or twelve feet,—and the huge masses of piers and side-walls that occur, particularly in the transepts, would render the task of removal, save by

* A slight sketch of the lower part of this tower is delineated as the background to the armorial bearings of the Priory.—Vide illustration, p. 121.

some violent destructive process, almost impracticable. The consequence of this difficulty is, that excavations have hitherto been made very partially and imperfectly in detached spots; whilst it must be confessed that if, in every instance, the hopes of the excavator have not been completely realised in the result of his attempt, enough has usually been disclosed to engender a strong desire of seeing more. Still there is room to hope that, at some future period, the curiosity of the visitor may be gratified by seeing an entire clearance of the whole area of the church; and in that case, we trust that the increasing regard for such venerable remnants of a by-gone age, and the growing taste for everything that is calculated to throw light upon the acquirements and tastes of a remote period in our history, would restrain the curious from defacing or doing violence to the fragments that remain.

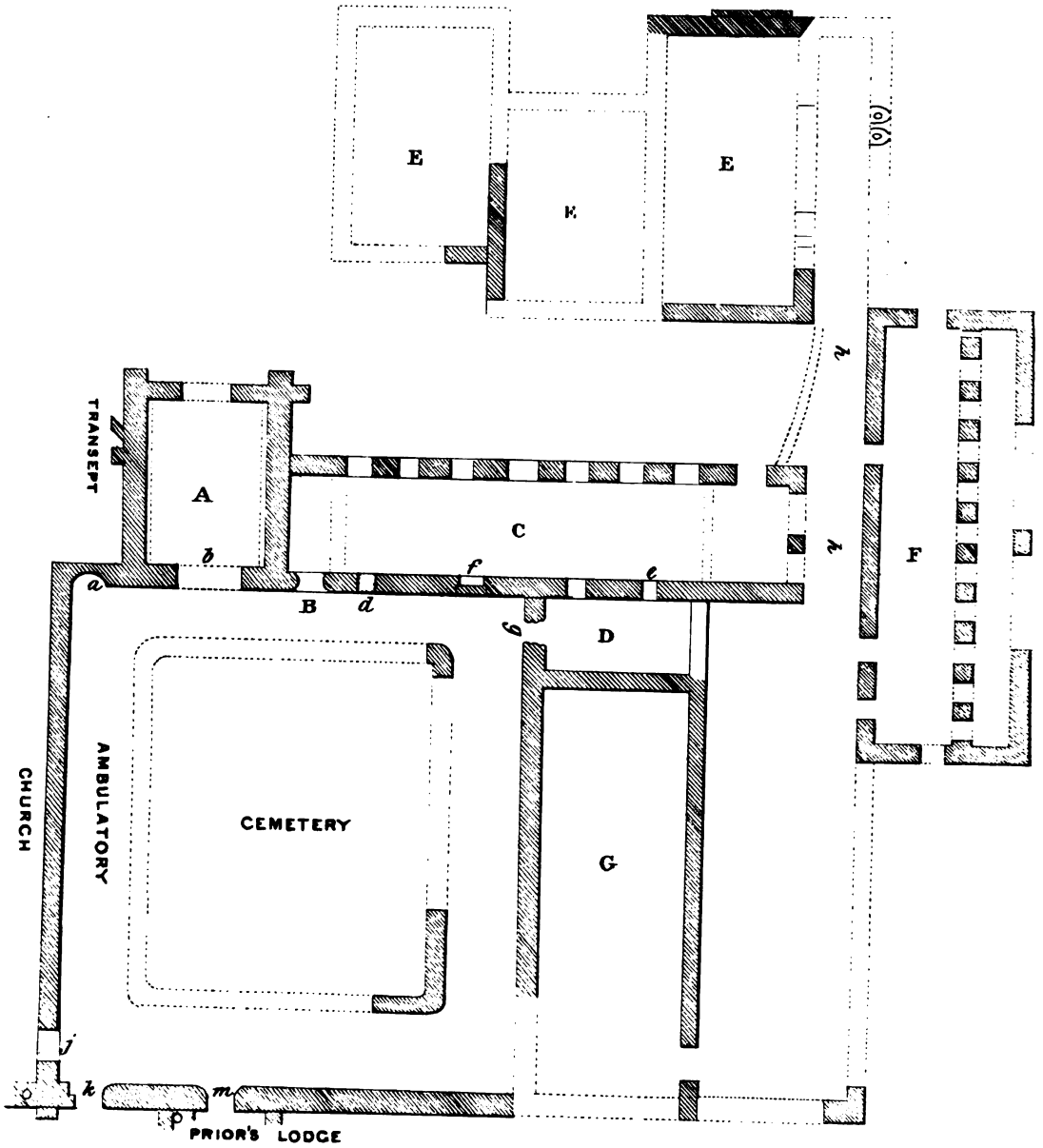
We have already observed, that wherever an excavation has been made, the pavement of the church has been found to consist of small, plain, red tiles. To this we may add, that in most cases considerable quantities of thick stained glass, of every shade of colour, have been found mixed up with the superincumbent rubbish, of course in minute fragments, but in such abun-

dance as to indicate that "a dim religious light" was wont to be cast through many "a richly storied pane;" portions of lead accompany them: and, in the vicinity of doorways, many large-headed studding-nails serve to show the former presence of an oaken portal.

Upon removing the soil from the eastern end of the south aisle, near to the chapel [*c.*], in the early part of the year 1837, there was disclosed a stone sarcophagus, partly resting beneath the level of the pavement, and (singular enough) partly projecting above its surface. To understand the eager excitement produced by this disclosure, it is necessary to premise that an opinion has long prevailed among the labouring part of the population of the adjoining parishes, and it is one pretty generally entertained, we believe, in the neighbourhood of all monastic remains, that in some part or another of the ruins a buried treasure, or a coffer of valuables at the very least, is to be found, and that some day it will be brought to light. Every excavation that is attempted is believed primarily to be prompted by this golden inducement, and the repeated disappointments which so regularly ensue, so far from shaking the belief, only serve to whet the appetite and strengthen the conviction

of treasure being buried here, if we would but dig deep enough! In the present instance this prevailing impression sealed the fate of the sarcophagus. What could such a mysterious-looking object possibly be but the long-sought-for receptacle of hoarded wealth? Heedless of the total absence of care manifested for its concealment, it was at once decided that this must contain somewhat of important value; and while one hastily summoned the family of the occupier, another spread the report in the villages, and speedily brought down a host of eager expectants hurrying to the scramble which they of course concluded would follow. In the meantime the workmen pursued their labour, and in their eagerness to raise the supposed chest, it was broken into three portions, when were displayed the remains of a human being, peaceably reposing in their "narrow cell," and till that moment undisturbed. A curious fact was now developed. The sarcophagus, of thick but friable stones, perfectly plain, and to all appearance of ancient date, had in all probability been removed from some other spot to its present destination. A shallow grave had been dug beneath the pavement of the aisle and its bottom coated with cement. Upon this the body of the deceased was simply laid, wrapped in a shroud of coarse

Blomefield records the names of some few benefactors who, he says, are buried in the Priory Church, but hitherto no authentic proof of this fact has been disclosed. In the course of the past year, while tracing the area of the pavement in the very centre between the transepts, we exposed a plain slab of dark stone, utterly without inscription, date, initial, or ornament of any kind. From the fall of ruin the stone had been cracked in the centre, but in other respects had been undisturbed. Upon raising it we found that it rested on an even bed of river sand, within three feet of which reposed a skeleton in perfect preservation, placed in a shallow grave cut into the natural chalk formation of the district. There were slight indications of the original presence of a coffin, but no cross, agnus, or other relique such as are usually found to accompany the remains of a defunct ecclesiastic. From this circumstance, and the situation of the grave, we are disposed to imagine the body to have been that of some layman or other benefactor. It is likely that a more extended clearance would establish this point beyond a question.



CONVENTUAL BUILDINGS OF CASTLEBACH.

THE CLOISTER.

Quitting the church through the small doorway [j], in the basement of the south-west tower, we enter upon the Cloister, around which the most conspicuous portions of the domestic part of the establishment were methodically arranged.

Wherever a monastic establishment of any importance exists, a cloister appears to be an indispensable appendage. The advantage which it afforded to the fraternity to enjoy air and exercise whatever the state of the weather, at the same time that a complete privacy was effected, rendered the claustrum an important feature in their domestic arrangements, and we accordingly find it annexed to almost every cathedral and collegiate church in the kingdom. In all probability the idea, together with that of the modern piazza of the Italians, was derived from the ancient Greek portico or peristyle; or, if Scripture authority be deemed of greater weight in such a case, the porch of the glorious structure erected by Solomon may have furnished the type of this contrivance. But, whatever the cause, facility of access to the principal offices of the establishment was doubtless an additional motive for its adoption; and those who are familiar with

the simple and beautiful peristyles that so frequently occur in the disinterred houses of Pompeii will at once recognise the analogy.

The present cloister comprises a square of one hundred feet, the covered ambulatory being of a uniform width of ten feet all round, the cemetery occupying the centre as customary. The back wall is nearly entire on each of the sides; but of the arcade separating the ambulatory from the cemetery scarcely any traces now remain above the soil, a fragment or two only being visible in the south-west and south-east corners. It is difficult to conjecture the style and proportion of the arcades, but from the perfect simplicity of the remaining fragments, it is probable that they were as plain as possible, which was usually the case with the earliest examples of this kind of structure. At a certain elevation in the back wall may be traced the ridge line of the ambulatory roof, immediately above which are the windows of the prior's residence, and of other apartments in the several buildings that commanded this area; a satisfactory proof that no range of dormitories or other cells immediately surmounted the ambulatory, as some have considered the usual practice to have been. The principal offices of the establishment communicated with the cloister by

means of semicircular arched doorways—which will presently be noticed in detail—originally faced with stone, but now entirely deprived of that covering.

Traversing the cloister, at right angles from the doorway at which we enter [*j*], we commence our examination at its north-eastern corner. The first archway that we encounter was long supposed to have been a way of communication with the south transept of the church; and until the partial removal of the adjacent soil, it certainly had all the appearance of one. It is now apparent, however, that the existing opening [*a*] has been violently forced through the thin back wall subsequent to the dilapidation of the buildings, and that the supposed doorway was nothing more than a deep recess containing a seat, or more probably a lavatory similar to an arrangement still observable in the beautifully-preserved cloister at Norwich. The sole entrance to the church from this part of the building seems to have been by the doorway in the tower through which we have already passed.

Within a few paces of the lavatory, and immediately contiguous to the south wall of the transept, we enter

THE CHAPTER-ROOM [A].

This was a noble apartment, 38 feet by 22, and evidently finished with a degree of richness and elegance that well became the official saloon of the establishment. The north and south walls were occupied by elegant canopies of stone-work belonging to the respective stalls of the fraternity, the traces of eighteen of which on each side are still distinctly visible, although the stone itself is removed from hence as elsewhere: the number of monks on the foundation, it will be remembered, was thirty-six. At the east end was a noble window of stained glass, and to the west the stalls of the prior and sub-prior on either side of the entrance from the cloister [*b*]. This doorway we suppose to have been of a highly-decorated character, from the simple fact that every portion of it has been carefully removed to the very basement; a circumstance which does not occur with respect to other doorways on the same level. Money being the real object of the royal spoliator, every article of value or that could be rendered available for the purposes of sale was unscrupulously detached, and disposed of piecemeal to the readiest purchaser; and thus it is not unlikely that the enriched doorway of the chapter-room shared the

fate of altar tombs, and other decorated portions in the church, and was removed in an entire state. Above this entrance was a second window overlooking the roof of the ambulatory, and fronting the windows of the prior's lodge; whilst above the stalls of the brethren ran a range of low semicircular arches, pilasters, and ornamental mouldings, rising to the roof, which it is clear was vaulted, and probably faced with stone. In the south-eastern corner is a doorway [c] communicating with a narrow court-yard attached to the domestic offices of the establishment, through which the servants and lay-brethren had admittance when summoned before the chapter, the monks alone entering by the western doorway.

The area of this apartment having been cleared in the autumn of 1840, a pavement of small square tile, about the size of those in the church, but infinitely more finished and varied in character, was disclosed. The seats connected with the stalls doubtless partook of the character of the Miserere, and had been raised a step or two from the level of the floor, but every trace of them has disappeared. The pavement was very compactly and neatly laid in cement, presenting at brief and regular intervals groups of embossed and intaglio tile, the intervening spaces being filled with plain tile, and all highly glazed.

The annexed illustration will serve to show the character of these varied groups. The tiles were arranged in distinct groups of four of the same pattern placed in immediate contact with each other, and, after an interval, another group of four of another pattern, the several patches consisting of an even number of tile, bearing precisely the same device, each patch differing from its neighbour.

Some of the tile bore the device of a deer exceedingly well executed in high relief, the head raised, and the antlers thrown back: the glaze of these was yellow. (Vide illustration.)

Others bore coats of arms,—the one lozenges intermingled with birds, the letter B surmounting the shield; the other presenting the appearance of simple drapery, surmounted with the letter W;—these were covered with a dark green glaze.

Some bore the Christian name of the Prior for the time being, or of some benefactor, to this effect—"Thomas," covered with a yellow glaze.

Others again, in dark glaze, bore on a shield the three lions passant of England.

Some had the device of a dragon, or chimæra, with extended wings, in high relief; others, simple roses and



Enriched by H. Nathan.

EMBOSSSED PAYMENT.



EMBOSSED PAYMENT.



Upon the whole, the effect of this handsome apartment, in its perfect state, must have been exceedingly pleasing; and the effectual manner in which it has been stripped will suffice to show that considerable importance was attached to the value of its enrichments.

THE DORMITORY.

The next archway [B] on this side of the cloister opens upon a staircase conducting to the dormitory, which, with the exception of the lateral walls, has long since disappeared. It has been generally supposed that in conventual buildings the dormitory usually surmounted the west or south sides of the cloister, and in the majority of cases it may indeed have been so. But in the present instance it is obvious such an arrangement was not adopted, from the simple fact that the ambulatory is overlooked on every side by windows belonging to different apartments of the establishment, a circumstance which absolutely precludes the possibility of any apartments immediately surmounting the cloister.

The present stair, the fruit of one of our earliest researches among the remains, consists of an easy flight of stone steps, apparently twenty-two in number, each

6 ft. 6 in. by 15 inch., let into the wall on either side, and lighted at the top by a window of stained glass in the eastern wall. The entrance was closed by a folding door raised one step from the level of the cloister, of which the left half was usually kept shut, as we may observe from the manner in which the right half of the step is worn by the passage of feet. The steps that remain, bearing evident traces of their frequent use, are six in number, the falling ruin having fortunately covered them to that extent before the work of piecemeal spoliation had commenced in this quarter: the rest, however, with the exception of a fragment or two, are quite gone. In the stone-work of the steps, close against the north side, may be observed in two places small square holes, in which iron supports have been inserted to sustain a rope to assist the person mounting the stair; a serviceable aid to those of the fraternity who, in spite of Cluniac austerity, upon occasion of high wassail, might retire to rest some "wee bit fou," as the song has it. We are reluctant to adopt such a conclusion as absolute; but looking at the secure manner in which the stair was flanked, and its easy declivity, we cannot account for the adoption of such a precaution except with a view to the possible contingency we have intimated; or (which is certainly

the more charitable inference) it might have been so arranged in order to facilitate the ascent of the infirm, the aged, and the care-worn.

Of the dormitory itself nothing distinctly remains even for conjecture to frame an opinion upon. To all appearance, it extended the whole length of the basement, including a portion of the staircase, in all some 110 feet by 26; a space which would furnish ample accommodation for the cells of the fraternity ranged on either side of a common passage or gallery passing along its entire length at the centre. It was lighted by seven windows on the eastern side, four on the western, overlooking the ambulatory of the cloister, and two more also to the west beyond the buildings on the south side of it. All these windows originally were strictly Norman, as the stone moulding still extant in one or two places plainly indicates; but it seems that they were subsequently altered more than once in a very clumsy, irregular, and unsightly fashion, as expediency required, or the taste and means declined. The range of the floor of this part of the premises is still very perceptible in the side walls. Security and privacy were the chief things aimed at in the arrangement of the dormitory; for the usual custom was, when the monks had retired to rest, for the servitor,

whose business it was to attend upon the sleeping cells, to lock the outer door, and carry the key to the prior or sub-prior, by whom they were again returned to the attendant when he went to summon the fraternity to rise at the appointed hour in the morning; a proceeding which assuredly had more the air of a prison about it than a place of voluntary seclusion.

THE REFECTORY [C].

A pace or two beyond the entrance to the stair last referred to, we descend one step through a doorway [*d*], originally ornamented with triple pilasters, to the refectory, a spacious apartment, extending from its northern extremity to the screen, probably existing to the south, in length 91 feet by 26 in breadth. The floor consisted of large square glazed tile, alternately yellow and dark green, but without any device; and the lateral walls were ornamented by a succession of plain blind arches, from which the stone-work has been completely removed, the windows being on the east side, and one small arched doorway on the west [*c*] communicating with the locutory. The floor above was supported upon arches, of the springers of which traces remain in the side walls.

The screen of wood probably extended across the hall in a line just beyond the twelfth blind arch, from whence to the southern entrance was a distance of 14 feet 6 inches, constituting a sort of ante-hall to the dining-hall itself. The southern entrance to this noble apartment consisted of two handsome lofty arches, springing respectively from the east and west sides, and resting upon a massy pier in the centre, the basement of which still remains. This opened into a narrow passage about nine feet in width, conducting to the kitchen and other offices connected therewith.

The whole apartment may be mentally restored, by reference to the existing dining-halls in our great Universities, and to those in some ancient manorial residences.

The Rev. R. Forby, in his account of the ruins, conjectures the entrance from the cloister, which we have described as admitting us at once to the refectory, to have opened into the buttery merely, and places the screen a few feet in advance of it, supposing the present opening, marked *f* on the plan, to have been the only direct entrance from the cloister. But, with all deference to the judgment of this able and experienced antiquary, we have presumed to entertain a different opinion, and

we will give a brief statement of our reasons for adopting the arrangement which we have preferred.

Upon a close examination of the opening (f.) we were led to conclude that originally this was no entrance-way at all, but like the lavatory, a passage forced by the early spoliators of the fane. A close inspection of the interior of the arch will show traces of stucco abruptly curving *downwards* at little more than half the width of the wall. On the west or external side it will be seen that there is no indication whatever of a stone archway, such as may be clearly traced in every other instance where a doorway or even a blind arch existed. On the contrary, there are evident tokens of an opening having been *forced* here, the comparative thinness of the wall offering considerable facilities for the removal of the material. This will be found to have been indubitably the case with the immediately adjoining entrance to the locutory [g]. Upon removing the soil on a level with the floor to this point, no trace whatever was observed of a doorway, but a plain fragment of stone forming a portion of the arch, which here curved uniformly with the prevailing decoration of the apartment. In short, it appears to have been simply *a recess*, possibly for the reception of some article of furniture answering to our modern sideboard or beaufet.

Supposing this aperture to have been the entrance, and the screen to have occupied the place assigned to it by Mr. Forby, it would surely be strange that the entrance to so limited a space as that comprised between the screen and the north wall should be of the enriched character which the remains plainly indicate it to have possessed, whilst the immediate approach to the refectory from the cloister was left perfectly plain—nay, even unsightly! Again; if the buttery had been here, as conjectured by Mr. Forby, it was placed at a most inconvenient distance from the kitchen and similar offices—nay, even cut off from all communication with them, unless we suppose the opposite opening on the east side to have been a doorway into the small yard to the east of the refectory, of which there is no indication whatever. Now, by removing the screen to the quarter we have supposed to be its locality, we have a dining-hall of considerable length, with an anti-hall (which might have served as a buttery) directly communicating with the kitchen and offices, and readily accessible at all times to the servants without occasioning them to pass through the entire length of the hall, which must otherwise have been the case. There is obviously considerable difficulty in determining this point, nor are these suggestions

offered with any view to speak absolutely, but, upon a careful review of the circumstances, we are disposed to believe that we have adopted the most plausible conjecture.

THE LOCUTORY [D].

This is a small apartment to the west of the refectory, having an entrance from it [*e*] and another doorway [*g*] opening into the south side of the cloister. The purposes of this room corresponded in some respects with those of our modern Combination Rooms, where the monks retired after meals and joined in social conversation. Indeed, social chat was allowed here when, in conformity with the rigid Cluniac rules, silence was generally enjoined in other places, and the locutory was an indispensable feature in a Cluniac establishment. Du Cange informs us that in large foundations of this order there were not less than three apartments of this description. It may be thought that the present chamber could scarcely have been of dimensions sufficient for the purpose to which it was applied ; but a brief enumeration of the regulations which had reference to it, and which, like everything connected with the Cluniacs, bears the stamp of singularity, will serve to remove such an

impression. The Prior, the Sub-Prior, and the other officials of the establishment, might at any time assemble in the locutory on matters of business, but the claustral monks were not permitted to do so indiscriminately. Of these, rarely more than four were allowed to be present at one time, and they not to remain long; servants who might be summoned were never allowed to sit down, and no stranger could at any time be introduced. When one party had conversed for a short time, they made way for others; and thus a comparatively small space sufficed for the purposes of such an apartment.

The indications of a floor above show that this apartment was surmounted by a chamber of corresponding dimensions, which Mr. Forby ingeniously supposes to have been the scriptorium, with a door of communication on the west, conducting to a spacious apartment over the hall on the south side of the cloister, to be hereafter noticed.

THE OFFICES.

Repassing the refectory to the narrow passage at its southern extremity [*h*], and proceeding to the east, we arrive at the site of the kitchen, brewery, bakehouse, and domestic offices attached to the establishment [*E E*],

comprising that portion which was appropriated to the use of the servitors and lay brethren. The ruin here is so entire that very little remains save an irregular line of foundation, serving to mark the extent of the buildings, but affording no indication of their appropriation, unless the traces of what apparently was an extensive flue just visible above the soil on the south side be considered as determining the situation of the kitchen in this quarter. A narrow yard appears to have intervened between these offices, the east side of the refectory, and the south-east corner of the chapter-room, from whence there was a door of communication already noticed, thus affording ready access to the domestics to any quarter where their services might be required. It is greatly to be regretted that the extremely dilapidated state of the building in this quarter deprives us of much that might prove curious in the domestic economy of the fraternity; but the conspicuous position they occupied, as well as the comparative facility they afforded to the operations of the pickaxe, rendered them an early object of destruction. Much has even disappeared since 1810, when Mr. Forby's plan was published. From the fragments that remain it is obvious that the architectural character of this portion of the building was of a kind far less massy, and

of a date considerably later than the better preserved portions of the remains, probably coeval with the choir and side chapel of the church.

LONG ROOM TO THE SOUTH.

The domestic buildings of the establishment terminate to the south of the refectory with a long apartment [F] running east and west, in length 90 feet, by 19 feet 6 inches in breadth, inclusive of the cells to be noticed presently.

The purpose of this long chamber, in some respects, remains a matter of considerable doubt, although in one particular its application we believe to be sufficiently obvious. It was lighted by two windows only, one at either extremity, and the floor rested upon a deep-vaulted channel passing through the entire length of the building. There were apparently but two doors of entrance to this room, both from the passage to the south of the refectory [h], and the principal chamber of which we are speaking, itself vaulted, was surmounted by a low loft of the same length as the room beneath; this might serve simply as a store-chamber. Within rather more than three feet of the south external wall of the building is an

interior wall of singular thickness, perforated by twelve arched doorways opening to a similar number of once separate cells, the appearance of which has tended somewhat to perplex the visitor.

Mr. Forby pronounces this apartment to have been the cellar, (!) and we are at liberty to infer that of course the cells alluded to discharged the purpose of wine-bins ! He draws this conclusion from the supposition, that on account of its low situation and proximity to the river Nar, the Priory could not have been furnished with a cellar *under ground* ; and that from the studied manner in which coolness, ventilation, and convenience of access have obviously been consulted, no other locality presents such probability as the present. We readily admit the studied coolness, ventilation, and convenient access ; but the inference we derive from these facts widely differs from that of this able antiquary.

It certainly seems highly probable that the cellar was not a sunken one, although, as there are no land springs in the vicinity, it might have been depressed a few feet below the usual level with perfect security ; but it is not in this quarter that we must look for such a convenience, and a little consideration of the remains will readily suggest the purpose to which it was partially adapted.

Upon examining the eastern gable of the ruin, two arches will be observed, the larger one opening into the vaulted channel already noticed ; the smaller arch a little to the left of the former, communicating with a channel now completely choked with earth and fallen ruin, but running immediately under the range of cells mentioned above, as may be clearly ascertained from the small corresponding arch at the western extremity of the building. A slight examination of the surface of the ground towards the east, will show that a stream of water once flowed directly through these vaulted channels ; if it were not the original bed of the adjacent river itself, at least it constituted a branch of the stream, artificially diverted in this direction. In all probability the bulk of the stream was permitted to flow through the larger channel only ; but, at stated periods, by means of some contrivance analogous to a dam or floodgate, its course could be directed through the lesser channel, when it would scour its whole length with a degree of force proportioned to its confined limits. It seems, then, that the lesser passage served the purpose of a sewer, and the cells above may readily be conceived to have been a range of those indispensable conveniences which we cannot suppose any establishment of this kind to have

been without. The long apartment into which the cells open, may have been nothing more than a covered ambulatory, well ventilated, and of obvious utility to the frequenters of this region, especially during wet or inclement weather ; while the extensive loft above could be easily employed as a store-chamber, to which only its dimensions seem to warrant it could be adapted. We think that the coolness, ventilation, and convenience of access, so obviously consulted in the construction of this portion of the buildings, may be readily accounted for on the above supposition.

THE NOVICE HALL.

Retracing our steps through the refectory, and re-entering the cloister, we find its southern side (with the exception of the entrance to the locutory in the east angle) to be occupied by the unbroken wall of a long apartment [G], the use of which is not now very apparent, although the suggestion of Mr. Forby on the subject seems the most plausible, and is that which we prefer to adopt. He conjectures it to have been the Hall of Novices, where those who were afterwards to take upon them the monastic vows, and others who were

temporarily lodged in the establishment through motives of policy or economy, many of whom were little more than mere children, received regular instruction in the learning of the times. The suggestion acquires considerable probability from the fact that the only entrance to this chamber appears to have been in the south-western angle of the cloister, so that access could at all times be easily obtained to the novices, laymen, and pupils, without in any degree intruding upon the privacy and social rendezvous of the regular brethren of the establishment. Their sleeping apartments might have partly occupied the area above, the remaining portion comprising the library of the house, from which was an entrance into the scriptorium, noticed in another place.

A portion of a singular narrow-vaulted passage, constructed in the very thickness of the wall itself, and once apparently continuing through its entire length, may still be observed in the northern wall of this apartment. The fragment that remains shows that no means of egress or regress existed to the east where the passage abruptly terminates with solid wall on its three sides. Light and the free circulation of the air were alike excluded; while toward its extremity the floor gradually rises, so as effectually to prevent a tall person from

standing upright within the cell. We cannot suppose this passage to have been an arcade similar to those which circulate round the church, and the only purpose to which it would seem to be applicable is that of punishment or penance. It is well known that Abbeys, Priors, and other conventual buildings had their prisons; and in some instances these have been of a very formidable character, and placed in curious and unexpected situations. We do not imagine the spot now under notice to have been regarded exactly as a dungeon, but simply as a place of minor or temporary punishment. Perhaps some refractory pupil or dull student, occasionally, in extreme cases may have been treated with a taste of "the silent system" in "this black hole," with beneficial advantage to his wayward disposition or sluggish intellect.

The west side of the cloister now remains for a brief notice, and is entirely flanked by buildings constituting and in connexion with the Prior's lodge. There were two entrances from the cloister to this portion of the establishment; the one marked [*k*] in the plan, contiguous to the church, opening into the waiting-hall of the lodge, being for the admission of such of the fraternity and lay members as might have business with their Superior;—the other [*m*] being a private door of com-

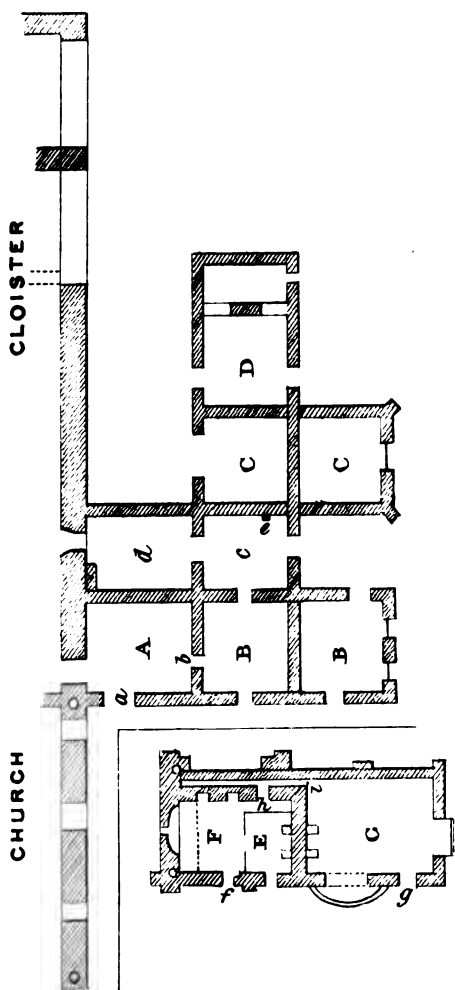
munication with the precincts, for the use of the Prior himself, or his domestics. These are of course now blocked up with modern materials, and externally deprived of their enrichments; but their Norman construction is still apparent.

It may here be observed, that the basement story throughout the existing remains of the Prior's lodge still retains its perfect Norman character, while the upper portions, having undergone considerable alteration and repairs, and being in a great measure rebuilt, are the work of the time of Henry VII.

The window surmounting the entrance [*k*] overlooking the roof of the covered ambulatory on this side supplied light to the private oratory of the worthy Superior, and was doubtless filled with stained glass. The remaining windows on this side belonged to chambers no longer in existence, and the appropriation of which it is useless to conjecture.

THE LODGE.

Quitting the cloister and passing to the west front of the conventual Church, we find the Prior's lodge to occupy a range of building protruding immediately at right angles to the south-western tower of this sacred



THE PRIORY LODGE.

edifice. It had two fronts, one to the north and the other due west, the southern side communicating with the Prior's private garden. The most conspicuous features in the north front are an arched entrance of communication to the waiting-hall already mentioned, [a] on the plan, and visible also in our illustration of the west front of the church *. This entrance admitted visitors from without who sought audience with the Prior, and who thus obtained entrance without encroaching upon the private resort of the fraternity.

The other object deserving of peculiar attention is a capital specimen of an ancient bay-window, of admirable simplicity and solidity of construction, and remarkable for the singular manner in which it is supported, as it were, by a cluster of diminishing arches nestled one within the other.

At the western extremity of this wing of the building, is another excellent specimen of an early English window, of which the frame and mullions are stone, the lower part presenting a corbel head, flanked on either side by quatrefoil work, the whole being of the style prevalent in the thirteenth century. The west part of the lodge is broken by the projecting buildings of the modern house

* Vide Frontispiece.

attached to the Priory farm, many of the apartments of which are incorporated with portions of the old structure, and so altered as to have lost all trace of the purpose for which they were originally planned. Some very interesting specimens of art connected with the period are, however, interspersed in the various chambers, and, through the kindness of the occupier, visitors, upon proper application, may gratify their curiosity by a sight of the greater part of the remains which we are about to particularise.

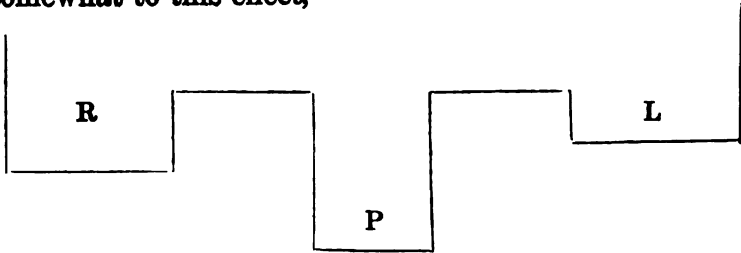
The doorway [a] opens into an apartment which we have already mentioned as a waiting-hall or vestibule [A]. The vaulting is plain and massy, and there are three entrances—the one just noticed, a second communicating with the cloister, and a third [b] connecting it with a second hall [B], formerly the principal hall of the establishment. The Norman doorways of the vestibule are distinguished by ornamental beading of a simple and somewhat rude character, indicating an indifferent state of art, and probably coeval with the foundation itself. Passing through the entrance [b], we arrive at the great Hall, a spacious and noble apartment, though now divided into a brewhouse and cellar. The vaulting of this apartment is of a more recent date than that of the

vestibule, being slightly pointed, and the ribs thinner and less massy. A central pillar supported the floor above, the ribs of the vault radiating from its summit.

On the right of the entrance is a piscina, or rather recess for a holy-water stoup; an appendage which occurring in another instance in this department of the Priory, serves to show that some ceremony was expected to be observed by those who were about to approach the presence of the Superior. The hall in question terminated the basement range of this wing of the building, and access was had to the upper or habitable apartments by means of a vaulted passage opening into the hall, and a stone stair on the side of the cloister, indicated in the plan, but now completely destroyed.

From this point the ancient remains are so completely incorporated with the details of the modern establishment, and have necessarily sustained such subdivision and alteration, as to render hopeless any attempt to define the method and extent of the original structure. A mere outline is all that it is possible to furnish, and this can be best conveyed by reference to the plan, which embraces as much as can be traced of the old foundation, although a glance will show that much is wanting to preserve the uniformity that once doubtless prevailed in

the original plan. The interruption caused by the projection of the modern buildings renders it extremely difficult for the casual visitor to trace the form of the lodge as it was originally planned; but a frequent and careful examination of the site enables us to convey, by a simple diagram, some idea of its outline. The principal façade was to the west; and from a central point in that direction, the lodge would have presented an outline somewhat to this effect,—



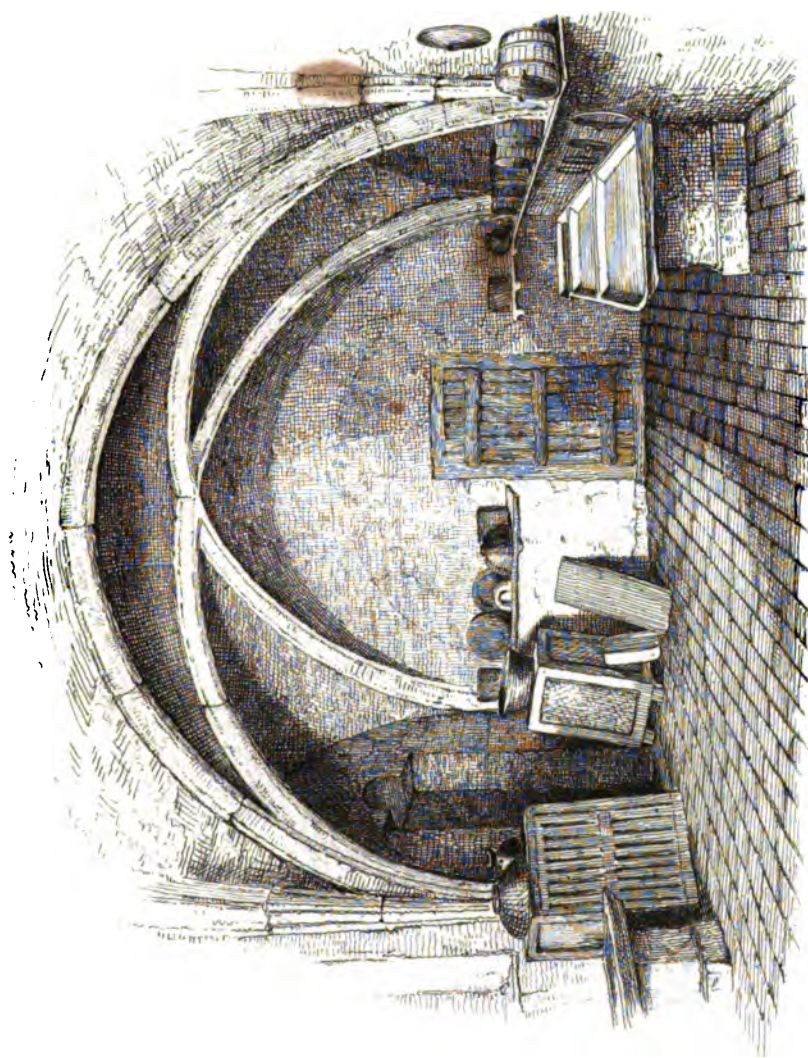
Here R will represent the right wing, containing the vestibule and hall already noticed, with chambers above; L, the left wing, now in great part gone; and P, a projecting porch, if it may so be called, with chambers above, the windows of which are still extant.

Reverting then to our plan, the next portion of the basement which still retains distinctive features is the central portion of the western façade, marked [C.] This, again, appears to have been nothing more than a hall, and from its situation was probably reserved for

the use of the Prior and such occasional visitors as might rank among his distinguished or private friends. Indeed, from all that we gather on a close examination of the site, it would seem that the basement plan was wholly taken up with halls, passages, and other accessories connected with the domestic economy of the establishment, the reception rooms and other apartments in the use of the Prior occupying the story immediately above. Upon this supposition alone can we account for the recurrence of vaulted chambers which, from their arrangement, were clearly not habitable apartments. The central hall, then, of which we are now speaking, is entered from the west through an entrance obviously of the time of Henry VII. when probably this projecting portion was erected. This part of the hall is now used as a kitchen; and immediately fronting the entrance, terminating the kitchen in that direction, is a vast, simple, and bold semicircular arch, springing from short columns, and indicating a fragment of the original Norman structure not to be mistaken. The arch in question is now, with the exception of a small doorway, filled up by modern masonry. The doorway alluded to admits us to a second portion of the hall, now fitted up and used as a dairy. Here the work around us is obviously Norman of

a very bold and striking description, and so characteristic of that peculiar style of art that we have selected the apartment as the subject of the accompanying illustration, which conveys a faithful transcript of the massy but graceful appearance of the intersecting ribs. The modern doorway in the immediate centre is the entrance from the kitchen, to the right of which, or on the left of the drawing, is an entrance-way of remarkable and unusual form, now blocked up. The outline of this singular door bears a striking resemblance to the interior of a stone sarcophagus, excepting that the sides are strictly perpendicular to the floor, instead of converging towards the feet as in the latter case; from its situation it appears to have been a communication from this hall to the lower apartments and left wing of the lodge. In the latter direction it is impossible to trace the original structure any further; part of the wing has disappeared, and the rest has undergone such complicated division from repeated alterations as to lose all trace of its identity. The site, therefore, is only generally marked on the plan [D].

With respect to the basement plan, it still remains to observe that a small court-yard occurs between the great and the central halls [C], now known as the Pump-



Etched by H. Nisbam from a Drawing by C. Wright.

HALL IN THE PRIORS LODGE.

court. This was always an open space, as evidently appears from the external range of the buildings that surround it; but the adjoining space between this court and the cloister [*d*], now open, was once covered by apartments, of which only the stone window-frames and stanchels remain. In the court there is one object deserving of especial notice, and that is a capitally-preserved specimen of a Norman buttress, in the situation marked [*e*]. The buttress runs to a considerable height, is uniformly straight, and has on its surface a half pilaster surmounted by a plain capital and abacus. Immediately opposite to this, and strongly contrasting with it, is a heavy buttress of much later date, and the juxtaposition of these two affords an unusual opportunity of comparing the effect of the different styles. The verdict will doubtless be in favour of the lightness and simplicity of the former; but it should be remembered that buttresses were very sparingly employed in Norman work, the massy character of their structures rendering them quite independent of such extraneous aid, and they were introduced more for the sake of breaking the uniformity of a plain superficies than with any view to adding strength to the wall. Buttresses at a later period were literally intended as supports, and partake

of the ponderous character necessary for such a purpose.

But, quitting our sketch of the basement, we turn to the inspection of certain remaining apartments constituting the entire story of the right wing, which, from their comparative state of preservation, have always awakened considerable interest. Of these a separate plan is given.

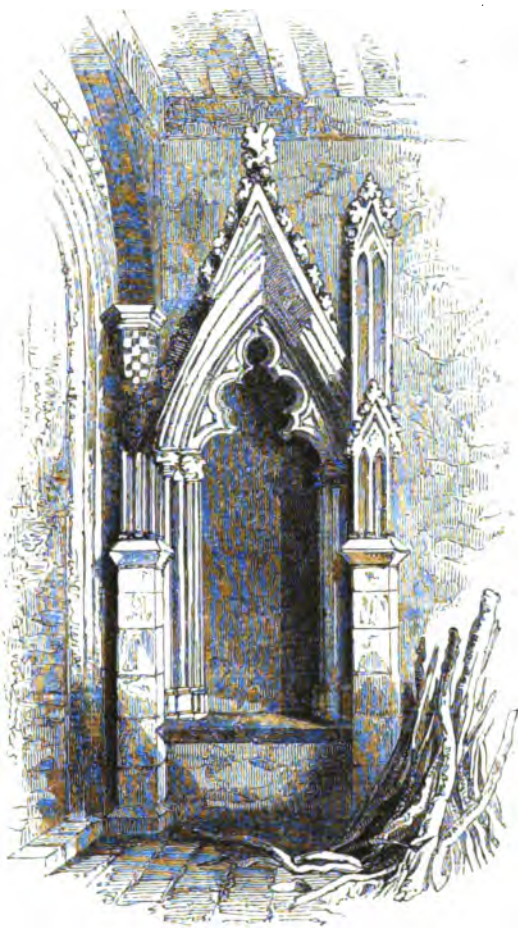
These apartments, now two in number, and serving the purposes of a corn-chamber, were originally divided into three, the present approach to them being by a modern stair from the exterior, and a doorway forced through the recess of a window of the fifteenth century, marked [f] on the plan. This admits the visitor into an apartment [E] formerly divided into two at something less than half its entire length by a partition of stud-work and hard cement, removed some years since, and now leaving but slender indications of its existence. The portion of the chamber in which we immediately stand [E] was obviously a bed-room, in all probability that of the Prior himself. It was approached through a narrow passage and low pointed doorway in its south-west corner, and was lighted by the single window through which the modern entrance is carried. An ample hearth

of the period of Henry VII. exists on the west side of the room, formerly bordered by an elaborate carving of foliage and flowers relieved by a deep flute, coloured scarlet, similar to another hearth in the adjoining apartment to be noticed presently. The carving, however, in both cases, we lament to say, has disappeared through the wanton curiosity of relic hunters among the visitors who have occasionally been admitted to the rooms. Fond of sight-seeing as we English are, there is certainly in the generality a strange development of the organ of destructiveness, wherever it can be humoured without attracting observation at the time.

A door in the partition wall, a little to the left of the present entrance, opened into the second apartment [F], which, there is abundant evidence to show, was the Prior's private oratory or chapel; thus confirming the impression that the bedroom which communicated with it was wont to be occupied by that worthy functionary himself. Rather more than a third of the apartment, towards the east end, is raised one step from the level of the adjoining floor; and here the rough outline of the altar still exists, surmounted by a pointed early English window, originally filled with stained glass. The chapel was still further lighted by a window on the north side,

corresponding, in size and appearance, with that of the adjoining bedchamber. The flooring of this and the other apartments consisted of small red brick neatly and compactly laid, as the remaining portions in this quarter suffice to show. The raised portion of the chamber, together with the altar, is comprised within a recess formed by a large and bold Norman arch bordered by a bead-ornament, the upper part of which is partially concealed by the more recent roof or ceiling. From this it appears that the eastern extremity of this chapel is part of the original foundation, not having been materially altered or disturbed when the other portions of the upper story were rebuilt by Prior Winchilsea, *temp.* Henry VII. In the north corner, immediately contiguous to this arch, is a door of entrance to the spiral stair that admitted the Prior into the body of the church; and close above it is the heraldic shield of England in the time of Henry VI. emblazoned in colours. A similar shield, at the corresponding extremity of the arch on the south side, presents the armorial bearings of De Warrenne, simple or and azure chequé, also emblazoned in the proper colours. Along the east wall, above, and on either side of the altar, are evident traces of an elaborate painting, representing pinnaced canopies and shrine-

work, surmounted by what appears to have been an inscription of which it is not possible now to recognise a single letter. On the north wall, immediately contiguous to the arched recess, is a canopied seat of stone, richly crocketed, and fashioned in the style of the thirteenth century. The annexed illustration presents a faithful representation of this enriched piece of work, and embraces a fragment



of the great arch of the recess, together with the shield of De Warrenne previously mentioned. This seat is popularly called a Confessional, and it may doubtless have been employed for that purpose by the Prior, in his

audience with such of the brethren as would repair to him for the purpose of making a clean breast of it; but in its situation and character it rather indicates a sellium for the use of the Superior, whilst his officiating chaplain celebrated mass at the adjoining altar, and corresponds with the sellia so frequent in the south wall of our chancels, although the subordinate seats are wanting in a private oratory. The course of the partition wall, as indicated in the plan, will show that this chapel could be approached at any time without interfering with the adjacent bedroom; and a separate doorway, communicating with a narrow passage, apparent from the ruined court below, demonstrates that a distinct way existed to this apartment from the halls and cloister whenever occasion might require. The roof or ceiling, which extends over the whole range of apartments, presents a pleasing specimen of the style prevalent in the domestic architecture of the period. It consists of a uniform series of well-proportioned principals, inclining with a gentle slope from a central rib to the side-walls, the intervals being filled with small planks, the material of the whole being oak and sweet chesnut. The entire ceiling was ornamented with the well-known cognizance of the united houses of York and Lancaster, disposed in

regular lines on the principals and pannels, a red and a white rose alternating at intervals of two or three inches. A short sprig and leaf are attached to each flower, and many of them may still be traced by the visitor, when his eye becomes accustomed to the uncertain light in the chamber. The flower is the simple Tudor rose, the centre in every instance being highly gilt, the petals painted in bright body colour. In its original state the effect of this simple decoration must have been eminently pleasing, the bright eye and brilliant colour of the flowers contrasting agreeably with the natural dark ground of the wood. The wood pannelling of the partition-wall, part of which still existed in Mr. Forby's time, was, as we learn on the authority of that gentleman, similarly decorated; and though other evidence were wanting, this circumstance alone would serve to establish the period when the upper portions of the lodge were rebuilt.

Quitting these apartments through an opening forced, of late years, in the thick wall, we enter the chamber [G], commonly designated as the Prior's dining-room. Though disposed rather to consider it as a reception-room, or audience-chamber, if we may suppose the Prior to have been dignified with one, we cannot fail to be

struck with its superior dimensions and appearance. The light in this apartment was abundantly supplied from the north by the handsome and characteristic bay-window which we noticed from the outside, and from the west by the projecting square window also previously noticed. Both these windows were partially, if not wholly, filled with painted glass, of which several fragments remained in Blomefield's time, who notices them ; nothing of the kind, however, now exists. In the north-west corner is a low pointed doorway, from which it is supposed there has been a flight of steps, connecting it with the external ground, and thus affording an easy mode of access to persons desirous of an interview with the Superior, on matters connected with the temporal or spiritual concerns of the foundation. But as, upon the face of it, this arrangement seems somewhat opposed to the notion of security and privacy which is apparent in all the other details of the establishment, we venture to hazard another conjecture respecting the use of this door, which we imagine to be supported by a circumstance that, under other suppositions, it is difficult to explain. It will be observed, that immediately to the right of this doorway [*g*] there is a recess for a holy-water stoup of rather unusual dimensions. It is not

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clearly apparent why such an appendage should exist within the walls of the Prior's apartment, if the door was a mere entrance; but may it not in reality have opened upon a simple balcony, or contrivance of that kind, apart from the ground, from which, upon particular occasions of festival, or otherwise, the Prior himself might address or give his benediction to the assembled crowd of pilgrims, wayfarers, and people who had just left the church, accompanying the act with a plentiful lustration of consecrated water from the adjoining stoup? Or was the recess nothing more than a lavatory for the Prior's use? We venture the suggestion with extreme deference, and solely from an unwillingness to suppose that a communication with the ground ever existed in this direction. From the external appearance of the building, it is clear that an entrance of some kind has been here, but it is equally clear at a glance that the work is modern. If a solid stair *did* once exist, surely *some* trace of it might be detected, but there is nothing of the kind. It is true that in Forby's time the only entrance to the chambers we are examining was through the doorway in question, but he himself expressly tells us that access was had to it by means of a simple ladder. This has been long since removed, the entrance blocked up, and the present one

constructed, as we have already described. Besides, such an entrance as is supposed would surely have been an unsightly blot on the symmetry and uniformity of the building; and upon the whole we cannot forbear inclining to the suggestion we have thus intimated. The solution of the difficulty is not a matter of moment either way; but if the latter idea be correct, it certainly presents us with a singular feature in the arrangement of this Cluniac foundation.

An arched entrance in the south-west corner [*h*], at present concealed from view by the stud-work of a modern closet built into the chamber, communicated with the interior of the lodge, and a similar doorway in the south-east angle [*i*], blocked up but still visible, opened into the passage connected with the bedroom, chapel, and stair leading to the halls. Contiguous to this latter entrance is a corbel-head in stone, so admirably preserved, and of such finished workmanship, that we have given an illustration of it at the end of this section. It represents an angel with extended wings, clad in chain-armour, and playing upon a cithern, in every respect resembling the modern guitar. As this really interesting specimen of art might easily escape observation, from its position in an obscure corner, unless

attention were expressly directed to it: its place is indicated in the plan [k]. On the east side is a spacious hearth, the counterpart of that previously described in the adjoining bedchamber, the chimney being common to both.

We have thus enumerated the most prominent features in these interesting remnants of a by-gone age, and with them we terminate our survey of the Prior's lodge. Although we have studied to render the detail as clear and comprehensive as possible, we are sensible that to the uninitiated reader there must be an apparent confusion in the account which no caution could entirely obviate. The intermixture of ruin and repeated modern alteration have so effectually dispersed the fragments, or obliterated the features of the original structure, as to render impracticable, or nearly so, any attempt at a systematic arrangement of the details, and nothing but the assistance of a plan could enable the visitor to obtain a general idea of the edifice as it was originally planned. The reader will have seen, however, that there is much to gratify curiosity; and indeed, viewed as a whole, we question whether any similar remains of the period, so strongly marked and defined, exist to a like extent in the kingdom. There may be isolated chambers extant

- of a far superior order, but the observation extends to the whole structure, and with reference to the class to which the foundation belongs. It is this circumstance which has attached so strong a degree of interest to the remains at Castleacre, and it must ever be a subject of regret to the antiquary that a greater degree of care has not been exercised in their preservation. For instance, in the arrangement of the dwelling for the modern purposes of the Priory farm, very much of that which is now bare ruin might have been retained, without impairing the original features of the edifice, or having recourse to the unsightly excrescence that now destroys the symmetrical outline of the old structure. The chambers of which we have just been speaking, in especial, might have been restored in all their original freshness at a comparatively trifling cost, and rendered beautiful and most comfortable apartments for family residence. But the age in which these modern alterations were first made was not a period conspicuous for particular veneration of by-gone days, or of feeling for ancient art; and it is only within the last half-century that a spirit has been kindled, happily increasing, in behalf of the works and imaginings of our stern ancestors. The fragments that are left to us are preserved with studious

care, and a feeling of admiration has superseded that of idle curiosity. The architect and the artist turn with avidity to these ancient stores; and modern art, with all its combined resources and advantages, has pride in re-embodiment the creations of an earlier epoch.

THE PRECINCTS.

Connected with the lodge, on its southern side, we may reasonably suppose was the Prior's private garden, and the site is still devoted to a similar purpose. It is curious enough that within this garden there yet stands a magnificent pear-tree, traditionally known to the inmates of the Priory for many long years past as "the Prior's pear." The tree is lofty, spreading, and evidently of great age, though it flourishes with unimpaired vigour, and bears abundantly year after year; the fruit is small, and of the class distinguished as kitchen-pears. When simply stewed in water, it eats deliciously without requiring the aid of sugar. Now, without venturing to suppose that this venerable tree is a veritable remnant of the original garden in this place, it may be readily allowed that it is the legitimate offspring of some favourite stock that once flourished upon or near the spot. The

very name indicates its origin, and its presence is sufficient to establish the locality of the garden. It was inclosed by a wall, some portion of which may be traced on the east side.

With reference to the greater portion of the conventual inclosure extreme uncertainty necessarily prevails. After the dissolution and the subsequent disposal of the property, the characteristic features of the extensive area inclosed within the surrounding walls were speedily obliterated, to make way for the humbler purposes to which the land was then applied, and, save an indication not to be mistaken in one or two spots, probability is all that we can attempt to urge on the subject. The space inclosed within the walls, we have previously observed, comprised about thirty-six acres, of which but a comparatively small portion was occupied by the conventual buildings. Adjoining the church, to the north and east, was a cemetery; bones in considerable quantities having been disinterred there at various times. North of this, and to the verge of the boundary, may have been a grove, or cover of underwood, and to the east and south of the cemetery an orchard. Below this, and on the gentle slope of the hill to the south, sheltered from the keen winds, we would place the vineyard; an appendage

which, however it may startle the reader at the present day, there is no question was attached to every religious foundation of any importance. The cultivation of the vine, to a considerable extent, in this country at an earlier period of its history, is a fact now universally recognised, and the art was practised with great success by the monastics, whose well-stored cellars were mainly supplied from fruit of domestic growth, which, although it might not in point of quality compete with the rich produce of foreign lands, was yet of an excellence that modern experiments have failed to attain. It will be seen that "vineyards" are expressly named in the deed of surrender, as part of the possessions of this foundation, and one of them at least must have been within the precinct. Connected with this, and covering an extensive tract to the south-east and south, was the general garden of the establishment, comprising, amid a profuse variety of fruits of foreign as well as native kinds, several commodious stew-ponds, deriving abundant supply of water from the neighbouring stream, and well stocked with the finny tribe, so essential to the wants of a monastic fraternity. These stew-ponds have been filled up only within the present century, and their outline may still occasionally be traced by a practised eye. Gardening, it is

well known, was a constant resource of the inmates of a monastery, and in the Cluniac discipline it was even a part of duty. To the attention and skill of the religious we owe the introduction of many now familiar fruits, as well as the preservation of several indigenous varieties, whose excellence might have been lost to us for ever, through the neglect and indifference of a rude and unlettered age; and the modern horticulturist, revelling in the perfection to which skill and enlarged science, under the blessing of a bountiful Providence, have enabled him to bring the teeming produce of the earth, but little dreams for how much of his enjoyment he is indebted to the watchful and patient care of the poor secluded monk. The gardens of religious houses were, in short, the nurseries of an infant science, and in this respect alone claim to be regarded with interest.

On the south-west and western sides of the inclosure we may suppose the cows, and other stock, retained for the use of the fraternity, roamed in suitable pastures. There are in this direction several extensive remains obviously connected with the foundation, but in so ruinous a condition as to baffle all attempt to define their peculiar uses with precision. The most probable supposition is that they were stables and out-buildings

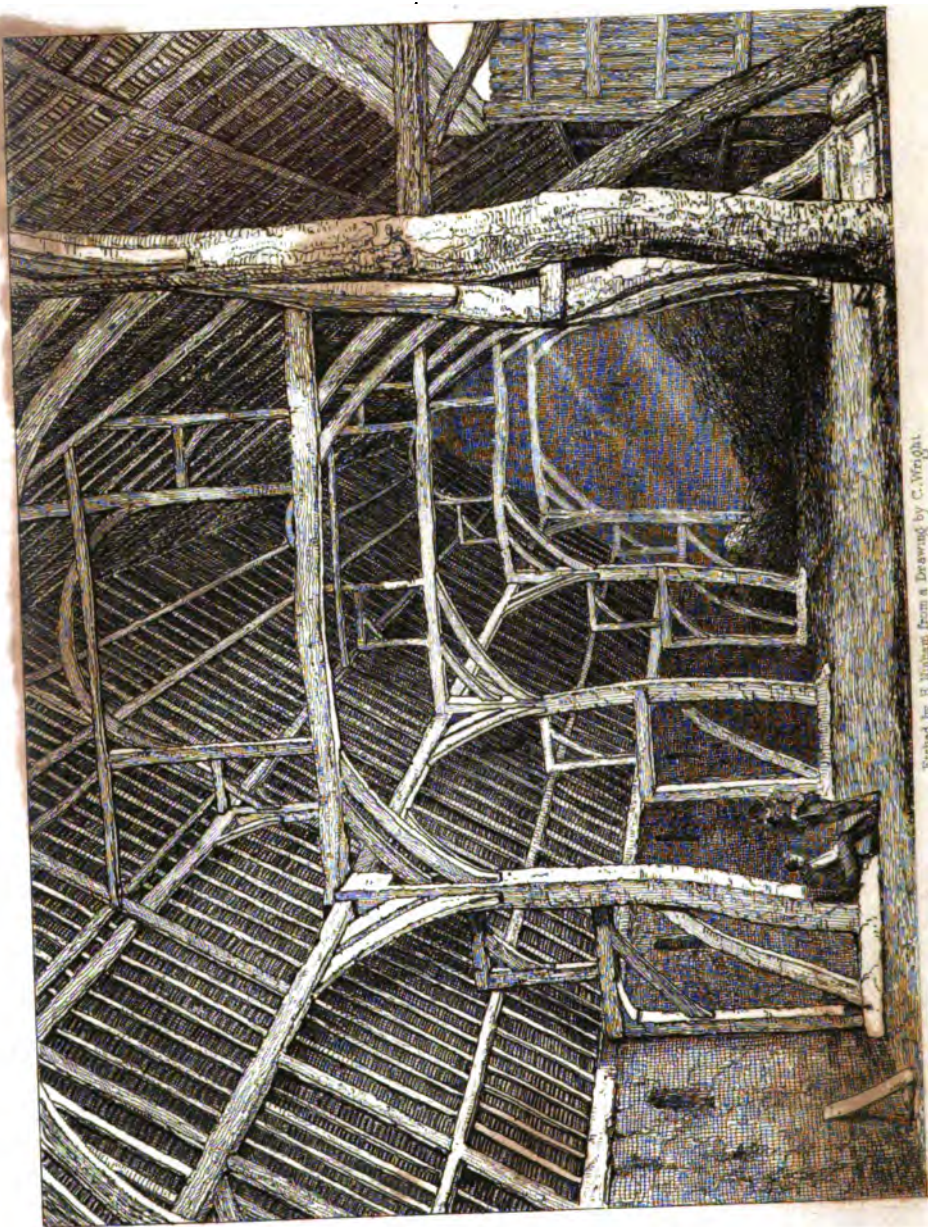
of that nature, together with a hostelry for the reception of strangers and wayfarers who might claim hospitality from the worthy brethren, but whose rank or situation in life would not entitle them to reception in the lodge itself. Some provision of this kind for the lowly pilgrims was usual, and the proverbial bounty of the Cluniacs would render them subject to a frequent succession of such visitors. There is here a long ruin, 220 ft. by 21, that we are disposed to believe formed a portion of this structure. Its situation is sufficiently remote from the general buildings of the establishment to secure its inmates against the chance of interruption whilst it was at the same time within the observation of the Superior. It is, however, useless to speculate in a matter of so much uncertainty, and we can only incline to the most probable supposition. Mr. Forby, it is true, places the hostelry in a far different situation, namely, in immediate connexion with the lodge, but there does not appear to be any decided rule in the matter, and when we consider the purposes to which such a building was usually applied, somewhat resembling the freedom of an inn, (though under certain positive restrictions,) ample reason will be found to reject the supposition. We have frequently and carefully examined the site to

which we give the preference, and the impression has strengthened on every visit. Be it as it may, the remains in this quarter are certainly deserving of more attention than usually fall to their share from the superior importance of the adjacent ruin, and at some future period more decisive light may be thrown upon the subject.

THE GRANGE.

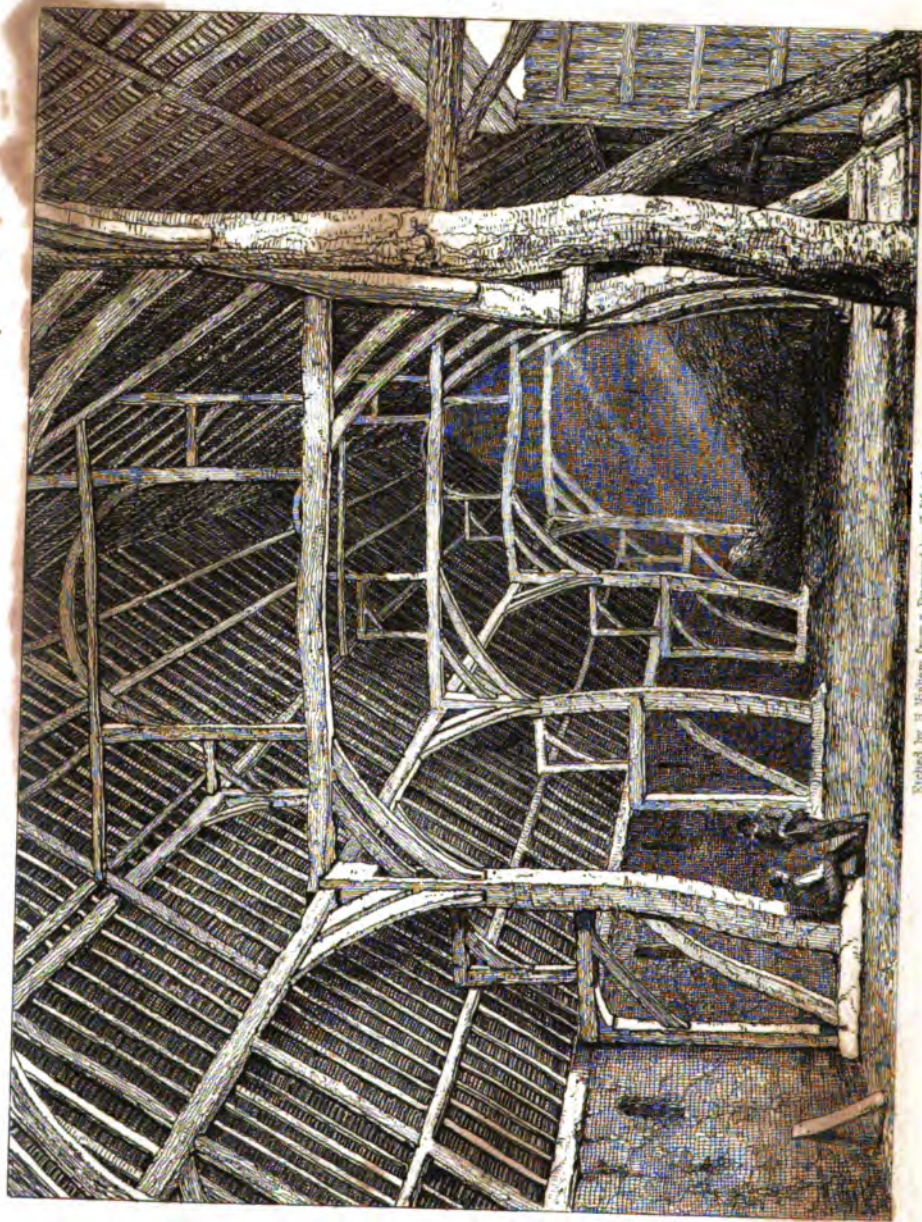
It is with a regret which none but a zealous antiquary perhaps can rightly appreciate, that we are compelled to speak in the past tense of one of the most interesting remains of a by-gone age, a considerable portion of which was standing so late as the summer of 1838, within the monastic inclosure. The Old Priory Barn has totally disappeared, and its actual site is now partially occupied by a kindred structure of recent completion.

It ranged due east and west within a few yards of the south-western angle of the great entrance to the precinct, and *externally* presented nothing very remarkable in its appearance except the unusual length and prolonged pitch of the roof, which imparted to it the appearance of a low building, whereas it was in fact of



Painted by H. Johnson from a Drawing by C. Wright.

THE PRIORY GRANGE.



Etched by H. Fisher from a Drawing by C. Wright

THE PRIORY GRANGE.

considerable height. The total length somewhat exceeded 160 ft., of which about 60 ft. was comparatively modern, a considerable portion of the original building having fallen early in the last century. There is no doubt that the structure originally was of much greater length than this, as it is said there were no less than eleven bays connected with it. A space, however, of nearly 100 feet of the building remained precisely in its primitive condition, (with the exception of occasional renovations of its huge thatch,) and *internally* the effect was curious and striking.

The accompanying illustration will convey more effectually than a mere verbal account an idea of the appearance of the interior of this venerable grange at a time when it could, of course, be viewed to the best advantage, free from corn. The drawing was made by our excellent friend and coadjutor, in the summer of 1838, within a few days of the dilapidation of the original, and is a most faithful representation of its curious and picturesque interior.

It will be seen that a regular design pervades the disposition of the huge supports and beams that constitute the frame-work of the barn, partaking somewhat of the character of a dining-hall of the olden time, or

of the rough outline of a conventual church. Supporting columns, consisting of massy timbers of oak and ash, ten in number, were ranged five on each side, at a distance of eight feet from the lateral walls, thus forming spaces to the north and south corresponding with the analogous aisles of a church, an intermediate width of twenty-two feet answering to the nave. The supporting columns were united over the intermediate space at a height of twenty-two feet from the floor, by huge beams, above which again rose arches and spars of wood to the summit, the entire distance from the ground to the ridge of the roof not being less than thirty-eight feet. Now it appears that the side walls did not exceed a height of twelve feet, and from this elevation sprung the roof, presenting a vast superficies of thatch gradually sloping to a pitch of thirty-two feet on each side, where they ultimately met. The internal breadth of the barn between the lateral walls was thirty-eight feet. Upon examining the details, the method pursued in the erection of this grange became at once apparent. It seems that the entire frame-work of timber had been put together in the first place, presenting a huge skeleton of the future edifice, the intervals between the extreme lateral supports being afterwards filled up

with squared blocks of chalk, of which the whole internal wall was composed, while externally a uniform casing of the usual material, rough flint, combining strength and solidity, was added. As a whole, and considering the extreme rarity of conventual barns existing in so complete a state, it is much to be lamented that the removal of the curious structure was deemed necessary, but independently of the extremely ticklish condition of the upper portions of the roof, its vast dimensions rendered it very inconvenient for the modern purposes of the farm with which it was connected. In its palmy days it doubtless was made the depository of good store of tithe from the neighbouring lands, as well as of the produce of its own, but now a building of diminished proportions has been found more serviceable for the latter purpose. To present at one view the dimensions of this ancient repository of the fruits of the earth, we subjoin a statement of measurements taken at the time.

	FEET.
Total external length of the barn, as it existed in May 1838	160
Internal length of the oldest portion	100
Breadth of ditto	38
Perpendicular height	38
Ditto to the transverse beams	22
Height of side walls	12

On the extreme verge of the precinct, at its north-east angle, standing *in triviis*, was a small chapel, apparently of the fourteenth century, having a pointed window to the east, and neatly chequered with alternate blocks of stone and squared flint. The dimensions of this little shrine do not exceed 12 feet by 8, and this appears to have been the entire size of the building. It is not easy to say what might be the motive that prompted the construction of a miniature fane in such a situation, or to what peculiar purpose it was devoted. It is matter of history that, about the period to which we assign the structure, a peculiar jealousy existed between the regular and secular clergy, and the monastics and the parish priests were severally emulous to render the altars at which they respectively served objects of attraction to the devout and superstitious. It may have been here that the increasing attraction of the altars in the adjacent parish church disturbed the equanimity of the worthy brethren of the Priory, and led them to place a chapelry at the junction of three roads, to serve as a foil to the splendours of the altars of St. James, St. Bennet, and Our Lady. We would not willingly impute such narrowness of mind to the wealthy and independent Cluniacs, and would fain hope that a worthier motive

prompted the contrivance, but it must ever remain a mystery. The probability is that, in reality, it was a chauntry commemorative of, or the pious work of, some benefactor. It is now occupied as a cottage, and possesses no trace of its original destination in the interior. From the garden of this cottage the visitor may obtain the pretty bird's-eye view of the remains represented at the head of the preceding section, p. 119.

Before we pass away from an inclosure so replete with food for reflection to all who love to linger over scenes that once occupied a prominent position in our social community, but are now fast fading into oblivion, there are one or two matters connected with the Priory which it behoves us to notice.

An impression pretty universally prevails with reference to the remains of such ancient structures, that an elaborate and careful search among them would be repaid by the discovery of some object of extraordinary worth or interest. We imagine not. Bearing in mind the real motives of the great mover in the dissolution of religious houses, subtilely and plausibly as they were veiled, we may be sure that nothing of important or intrinsic value was likely to escape the rigid investigation of the commissioners, selected as they were from

the most devoted or most fawning of the regal adherents. In the case before us, there is indisputable evidence of the stripping of the vessel before it was abandoned as a wreck to the elements, and little more than what actually now remains could descend to the future possessors of the site. But if anything of moment did escape the scrutiny, what would be its fate at the hands of subsequent masters?—If they were attached to the former mode of faith, whilst they deplored the ruin it was beyond their power to retrieve, they would be careful to remove the venerated relic to some more secure and congenial resting-place. If they were warmed with the fresh and fervid spirit of the Reformation, or indifferent to either party, its destruction would in any case ensue; so that we cannot suppose that any modern search, undertaken with the view to reap substantial advantage from it, would issue in success. But with the antiquary the case is different. A coin, a fragment of ornamental moulding, an encaustic tile, a bead, are to him matters of interest that amply reward the pleasure of a patient search, and stimulate him to further exertion;—and here disappointment is not so likely to be his meed. The hope with which he engages in the work is untainted by a mercenary spirit, and his reward is found in the

Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

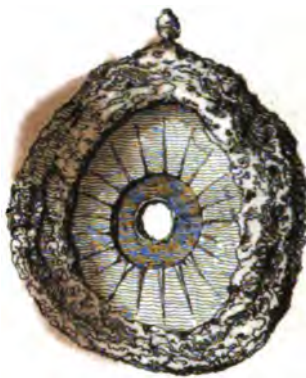


Fig. 6.



Fig. 5.

Enched by H. Nibham. from a Drawing by C. Wright.

BULLA &c. CASTLEAGRE.

gratification of his curiosity. Many little matters of the kind referred to have remunerated the diligence of the antiquary in his search among the ruins of Castleacre, and most probably a complete clearance of the area would bring to light very many more. Unimportant as these trifles may be, they are, nevertheless, remnants of a by-gone age, and local indications of the character and purpose of the site where they are found. For this reason a degree of interest attaches to them, which they might not perhaps intrinsically possess.

The accompanying plates will serve to show the nature of a few of these remains.

Figs. 1 and 2,—the common seal of the chapter and the private seal of the Prior, have already been described, p. 168.

Fig. 3. A leaden bulla of Pope Honorius III., found on the pavement of the north transept of the conventual church. On one side is the legend HONORIVS. P.P. III. ; on the reverse, between a cross, two heads, very rudely executed, respectively surmounted by the inscriptions S. PA. S. PE., referring to the Apostles Paul and Peter. It is worthy of note that the priority is assigned to the first-named Apostle. This pontiff ascended the papal chair in the same year with our Henry III., namely A.D., 1216, and it is to some year between this and the Pope's decease in 1227, that we must ascribe the bull to which this seal belonged.

Fig. 4. Part of a small case of lead, worn in the manner of a locket, and probably having in its centre some small fragment of a

valued relic, or of the consecrated wafer, protected by a small lens of crystal or glass. This is apparent from the central eye being radiated round the circumference.

Fig. 5. Bronze medal, distributed among the pilgrims who were present in Rome on the occasion of a jubilee. The device on each side is in an excellent state of preservation, and executed with much neatness. On one side we have the Pope breaking through the walled door in St. Peter's, with the legend, *Annus IVBILEI Roma*; on the reverse, the Wise Men's Offering. This medallion was found within the precinct.

Fig. 6. A bronze seal of ancient construction, found within the precinct. It bears the private device or monogram apparently of some stranger, who may have been a temporary sojourner in the Priory, but there is nothing to indicate its date or the rank of its original possessor. The legend, which appears to be *Ralph Maghtilt*, seems to indicate a Flemish origin.

We might particularise some slight indications of Roman art, such as a seal, coins, and fragments of terra cotta, as found on this spot, but they are of extremely rare occurrence. Keys, spurs, an elaborately-wrought censer of brass, are recorded to have been amongst the *spolia* of the Priory, and one or two objects of much interest, which will come under our notice in the succeeding section, are said, with some appearance of probability, to have originally belonged to this foundation.

When the exposed condition of the premises and the

utter indifference to the preservation of the remains which has prevailed until within the last half century, are borne in mind, it is really singular that any fragment should still be met with to gratify the curiosity of the antiquary. From an early period of their decline and fall, the Priory as well as the Castle have served as a quarry of materials to the surrounding villages. Not a cottage or a cow-shed was to be built, but recourse was had to the ruins unlet and unimpeded, nor was it until the property passed into the family of its present noble proprietor that any attempt was made to check this spirit of appropriation. Of late years nothing of the kind has occurred, and everything is now done to preserve the ruin intact from further violence ; but the mischief already accomplished is irreparable. A stranger, passing through the quaint and narrow streets of the village, cannot fail to be struck with the patchwork appearance of all the old dwellings, without exception. Blocks of stone, fragments of columns, bits of ornamental moulding, corbel heads, portions of curiously carved frieze, are all irregularly interspersed with ponderous flint-stones, and plainly indicate the source from whence they were derived. In one place we observe an elaborate carving from the lid of a sarcophagus imbedded in the wall ; in

another, the reversed capital of a Norman column does duty as the finial to a modern gable; in a third, the massy basement of a clustered column serves the homely purpose of a horse-block. How much of interest might have been preserved to the antiquary, by the exercise of a little care and vigilance! We rejoice to know that a better feeling now prevails, and the least-informed among the rising generation are insensibly acquiring a sentiment of respect for the “funny old walls” which characterise their native village.



THE PARISH CHURCH.



In late years considerable attention has been directed towards the subject of our parochial Churches, and a new interest has been rekindled with respect to their age, character, and architectural features. Not a village so humble or so remote but its little unpretending temple is eagerly sought out by the curious inquirer, and rarely does he quit the spot without having been able to add some little object worthy of note to his collections on the subject, whether it be an arch, a column, a sepulchral brass, or a corbel head. The Clergy, in particular, have, generally speaking, imbibed a spirit of interest and inquiry in reference to the churches of their respective benefices which promises to lead to the happiest results, and the reorganisation of the ancient and eminently useful office of Rural

Deans in the greater number of our Dioceses will tend materially to accelerate this desirable issue. We hope, then, ere many years, to see every parish church throughout the length and breadth of the land restored, so far as its architectural features are concerned, to somewhat of its pristine character and elegance;—the simple and beautiful arches, whether Saxon, Norman, or pointed, effectually relieved from the accumulated strata of whitewash which has been periodically smeared over their surface, and with which the smallest cranny of every moulding or enrichment has long since been choked so as to obliterate all trace of its original form;—the high and party-coloured pews reduced to decent proportions, or, better still, removed altogether, to give place to open benches of simple English oak;—the unsightly box, denominated by courtesy a reading-desk, supplanted by some more appropriate appendage,—(what so elegant, or so perfectly in keeping, as the ancient lettern*?)—and every architectural or other

* In the Church of Necton in Norfolk, through the spirited interference of W. Mason Esq., a gentleman whose judgment and skill as an amateur architect can only be surpassed by his zeal, considerable progress has been made in this goodly work of restoration. The reading-desk consists of a lettern of carved oak, richly but appropriately adorned, having on one side the Folio Bible, on the other a Book of Common Prayer to correspond. This, with a faldstool, also of carved oak, is raised

feature in the edifice brought, as far as practicable to its original condition. The awakened interest in behalf of such restorations, now universally prevailing, betokens a revival of sentiment toward the church in more senses than one; for it must be confessed that, until within the last half-century, and in some instances within the last fifteen years, the external and internal appearance of the greater portion of our parish churches partook much of the character of the ministrations conducted within their green and slimy walls,—alike distinguished by indifference and neglect. In many country parishes, how much greater interest has been excited and experienced in the erection or reparation of a barn or cow-shed, than in the decent ordering of the House of God! It is true, the Archdeacon has made his periodical visit to inspect the state of the edifice, and he has seen much that has required amendment and alteration, and has given his directions accordingly; but then, as in most cases, he cannot personally visit the church but once in the space of three or four years, the cautious

on a platform two or three steps from the level of the pavement, open on all sides and simply relieved by a low rail, so that the minister is distinctly seen of all the congregation, who can note his demeanour while he leads their devotions, whether he reverently stand or devoutly kneel; an advantage which the usual *pens*—(*quasi* sheep pens, for such they are,) assuredly do not always possess.

churchwarden, from a real indifference to the matter altogether, or from a timely dread of the bitterness of a church-rate, has taken care to defer the execution of his Ordinary's orders, until the recurrence of the period when he should again examine into the condition of the structure, and then they have been fulfilled in the most hasty and incomplete manner. The Archdeacon, however, repeats his visit, perceives an unwonted neatness in the arrangement, overlooks the time that has elapsed since his directions were issued, commends Mr. Churchwarden for his zeal and attention, and proceeds to suggest some other point of reparation or improvement really, it may be, requiring immediate attention, but of course to be postponed until pretty nearly the expiration of another four years! Now the revival of the ancient office to which we have already referred will, doubtless, tend to obviate much of this unseemly and negligent indifference; for as it is the express duty of the Rural Deans personally to inspect the churches in their several deaneries every year, it can only be by their connivance that such matters can be safely neglected, and much cost and labour in the repair of the sacred edifice will thus be anticipated by their timely interference. This circumstance, in addition to the increasing interest taken

in their churches by the incumbents themselves, is a very propitious omen in behalf of the future *status* and ordering of these venerable piles.

Another advantage likely to accrue from a renewal of this ancient feeling in behalf of our parish churches, is to be found in the beneficial influence it is calculated to exercise over modern ecclesiastical architecture. The fact, indeed, is in course of exemplification every day, and the numerous new churches which have recently been built, or are in process of erection in so many different parts of the kingdom, powerfully attest the advantageous change which has taken place in consequence of this revival. Look at the anomalous structures, designated as churches, which emanated from the meretricious taste of our architects some seventy or less years ago, and contrast them with the ecclesiastical edifices that are now springing up in our land. Compare the half Italian, half Grecian, dashed with Gothic, and even sprinkled with Arabesque combination, which characterises some of those buildings, with the bold, rich, yet chaste and consistent harmony which prevails in the structures of our ecclesiastical architects of the middle of the nineteenth century. It will be seen that these last have indeed about them a smack of the ancient zeal

and spirit, enriched by all the resources which experience and the progress of art combine to bear upon the subject.

From its former intimate connexion with the Priory, the parish church of Castleacre would require mention in this place, were it not that it also deserves notice from its presenting a good and noble specimen of a village sanctuary; we shall therefore be somewhat minute in the details.

The parish church stands upon the summit of the rising ground which constitutes the northern boundary of the vale of the Nar, in a spacious church-yard of full three acres in extent, immediately contiguous to the barbican, on its western side, and overlooking the ruins of the Priory and precinct in a south-westerly direction. It is a spacious and elaborate pile, consisting of nave, chancel, and north and south aisles, with a lofty and handsome tower at the west end, containing a peal of five bells much out of repair, and a clock, though the latter has been long disused.

The foundation dates somewhere about the close of the thirteenth, or commencement of the fourteenth, centuries, and its general architectural features are characteristic of the period referred to. The material

of the structure is, as usual in the greater part of the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, rough flint with quoins and buttresses of stone. A peculiarity of extremely rare occurrence may be remarked with respect to the form given to the stone-work towards the basement of the steeple tower;—this, it may be observed, has a pyramidal outline instead of the usual straight and sharply angular one generally to be found in such situations. The windows which light the church are twenty-five in number, namely, six large windows in the north aisle, four of a similar description in the south aisle, with a window at the east and west ends of the same, ten clerestory windows, five on each side, an east window, and another to the south of the chancel, and a large western window in the steeple-tower, as usual. These, though partaking of a uniform character, are extremely varied in detail, and pass through the several grades of early English, decorated, and perpendicular, thus indicating, it would seem, distinct periods of completion; and it is not improbable that one or more of them was at various times the work of some pious and munificent inhabitant of the parish. Three of these windows in the north aisle are particularly deserving of notice as pleasing specimens of the decorated style, and the great

east window, though now partially closed, presents a capital example of the pure early English.

The windows in the south aisle are of uniform patterns (perpendicular), and all, with the exception of the great lights at the east and west ends of the church respectively, are surmounted by an ogee arch. The great west window possesses transoms, as does also the small light at the western extremity of the south aisle.

The church has three principal entrances; the chief of these is to the north, under a deep projecting porch immediately contiguous to the steeple tower which abuts beyond it. Immediately on a line with this entrance, on the south side of the church, is a pointed doorway, but without any porch, it being only designed for the passage of a corpse into the church-yard. A good specimen of a plain early English doorway forms the sole entrance into the chancel on its south side. The porch entrance is, as it has ever been, the main way of admission to the congregation attending worship within the church, and has been surmounted by a small chamber lighted by a square mullioned window at its northern end. To the right of the entrance and consequently to the left of a person entering, is a deep arched recess for the reception of a holy-water stoup,

which convenience, however, has long ago disappeared. The door of entrance within the porch is pointed, under a square entablature, with embrasures, of the style prevalent in the time of Henry VI. At each angle are the shields of De Warrenne and Arundel respectively, precisely similar in character to those already noticed as occurring over the gateway leading to the precinct. A recent repair on the threshold of this entrance has brought to light a very ancient specimen of monumental art. It is a portion of a huge slab of slatestone, which until lately served as a stepping-stone of entrance to the church; the part hitherto concealed by the masonry presents the torso of certain figures cut in intaglio on the surface of the stone. The design is rude, but executed with considerable freedom;—all that now remains are the hands placed as in the attitude of prayer, with the bust and shoulders of two figures in flowing drapery, one of them having also a rich collar on the neck; the heads were broken off, and the lower portions of the figures appear to have been obliterated by the abrasion of feet. An inscription surrounded the whole, the characters being placed at wide intervals from each other;—of this, however, we can now only distinguish the letters E, S, H, apparently of Saxon form, and the

whole bears evidence of a style of monumental decoration long antecedent to the introduction of brasses. The fragments referred to are preserved in the church for the inspection of the curious.

The large doorway, placed as customary immediately beneath the great west window in the steeple, does not appear to have been employed as an entrance for the people generally, but simply for access to the tower, or for the convenience of workmen when occasion might require. The tower, lofty and well proportioned, is embattled at the summit, having at each of the angles an oblong pediment originally destined for the reception of full-length figures of the Evangelists or other saints, but at present occupied by certain very unsightly disfigurements, somewhat resembling chimney-pots,—the refined taste of some bygone *reformed* churchwarden. At the extremity of the nave, where it unites with the chancel, is the cross usually to be observed in such situations,—nearly perfect, and of rather uncommon form.

The interior of the church at once strikes the visitor with its neatness and uniform lightness and airiness. The arches are exceedingly bold and spacious, but, with their supporting columns, particularly light and elegant,

and do not fail to impress the spectator with a sense of their graceful proportion. They are five in number on each side, dividing the nave from the adjacent aisles north and south, two additional arches extending the aisle in the former direction, on a level with the chancel. The dimensions of the edifice may be inferred from the following interior measurements taken with every attention to accuracy:—

Length from East to West 148 feet.

Breadth across the aisles 48 feet.

The whole of this space is unbroken by galleries or other similar contrivances, except at the junction of the tower at the west end, where a light gallery serves to accommodate the humble parish choir and the children of the National School, who are here visible to the whole congregation. The free seats are still what all ought to be, open benches of “ brave old English oak,” terminated with poppy heads, and furnished with elbows, whereon rest lions and dogs alternately, (the latter having on huge collars, studded with beads or bells,) together with ample space for kneeling, &c., and the appropriate pews are fortunately kept so low as to interrupt in no important degree the view over the whole body of the edifice.

But as there are some points of considerable interest deserving notice in this structure, we shall adopt a more systematic order in our description of them.

Commencing then with the main body of the church, we shall find that the aisles, north and south, were respectively terminated by chapels, of which the framework of the screens, which divided them from the rest of the aisle, still remains to indicate the extent.

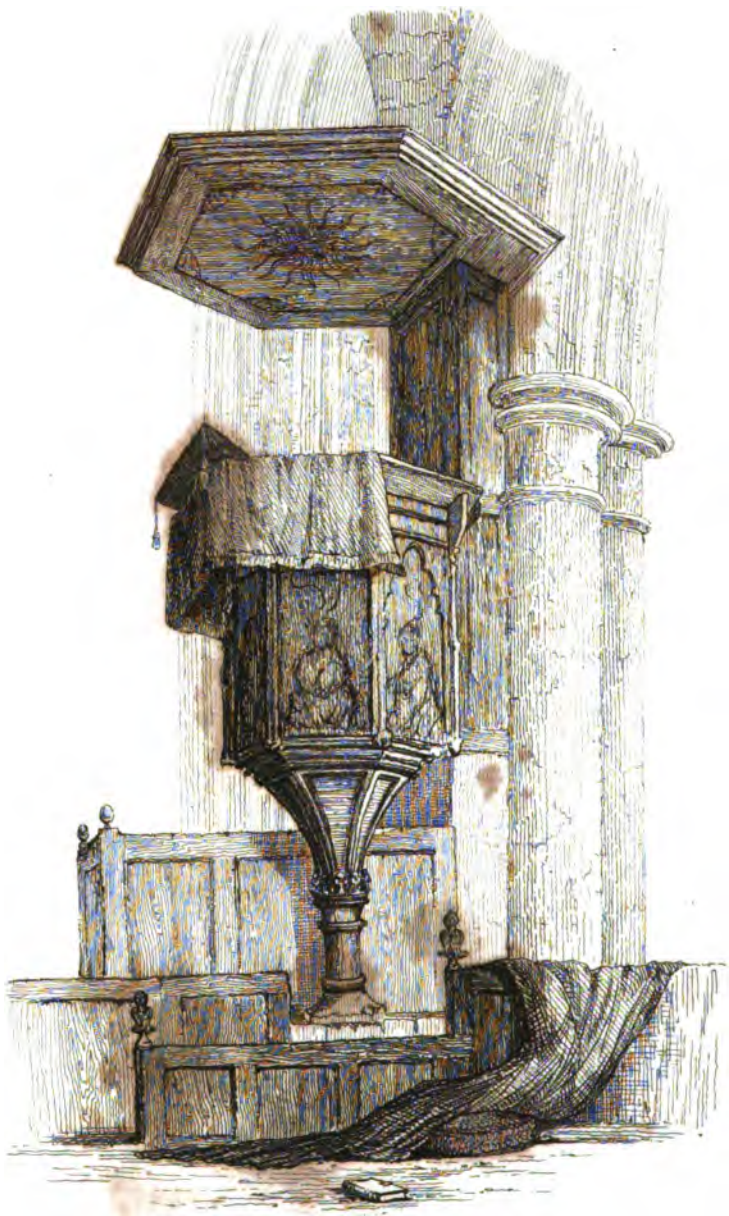
The chapel in the north aisle, in length 44 feet by 11 feet in breadth, was that peculiarly appropriated to the worship of the Virgin. This is evident from the cipher or monogram, MARIA, surmounted by the regal tiara of strawberry leaves, still distinctly visible upon the pannelling which once formed a portion of the dividing screen. The altar, piscina, and appendages at the east end are so completely obliterated as to leave no trace of their existence, but there can be no reasonable doubt that they once occupied that quarter; and from the importance usually attached to the shrine of Our Lady in all such buildings, we may suppose it to have been enriched with proportionate care and splendour. Connected with this chapel, it is recorded that a certain person of the name of Thomas Candler, of Castleacre, who it appears was buried somewhere in the church,

did, by his will, bearing date 1514, freely give two closes or paddocks to Thomas March, and his heirs, on the express condition of his and their keeping a light in the basin before Our Lady in the chapel, "with five wax candels to be light at evry principel feste; in every dobil feste two, and every single feste one: on a neglect thereof then the church reeves to take the closes, and to keep the same." The lights have long, very long, been neglected, but there is no appearance that the "church reeves" (churchwardens) ever had the closes!

The chapel in the south aisle was of somewhat inferior dimensions to the former, being only 17 feet by 11 feet, but possessed its screen similar to the other. There is nothing remaining to show with precision to whom this little chapelry was dedicated, but the probability is that it had for its patron St. Benedict, or Bennet, as he was more commonly designated, since there was a guild in the neighbouring village which claimed him for their tutelary guardian, and every guild we are informed had its peculiar patron's altar in the parish church. The pannelling which once formed part of the screen of this chapelry, presents the cypher N, surmounted by an abbatial mitre, indicating the name of some prior of the adjacent foundation, who either built, or endowed, or

restored this quarter at his own private cost. The altar was surmounted by a large and noble window to the east, now recently restored, and on the south side was a piscina, the frame-work of which still remains entire. On the north side of the chapel, resting against the angle of the wall, stood a full-length figure of the saint to whom it was dedicated, as may be clearly seen from the indications left.

Both chapels seem to have been profusely ornamented with pannelwork, adorned with ciphers, monograms, flowers, palm-trees, &c., in a variety of colours, of which the most predominant are scarlet, green, and white. The figures were formed by means of perforated sheets of metal, from which the design was cut, and a brush filled with the appropriate colour being passed over the surface of the metal, the figure was thus imprinted on the pannel, and with a degree of ease and rapidity that admitted of ready multiplication. The ground on the pannels that are divided by mullions and tracery, is alternately scarlet and green, or deep blue; but on the pannels not so divided, it is uniformly green, the figures in every case being simply white or pale yellow. In their recent state the decorative part of these chapels must have been strikingly rich and agreeable.



Etched by H. Minham from a Drawing by C. Wright

ANCIENT PULPIT.

Another object worthy of observation will be found in the Pulpit, of which the accompanying illustration will serve to convey a faithful idea. Its form is hexagonal, but of such extremely narrow dimensions that we are at a loss to imagine how the portly *Frères*, whom we suppose occasionally to have displayed their eloquence therefrom, could have been suitably accommodated within its restricted confines. Tradition reports this pulpit to have been removed from some situation in the old conventual Church, and the general character of its appearance renders that supposition probable. It may have occupied some place in one of the chapels or transepts of that structure. It is simply supported upon a single stem or low column, surmounted by a wreath of the Tudor flower, from which the panneling forming the bottom of the pulpit gradually radiates. The sides consist of single pannels, upon each of which is represented one of the Doctors of the Church, seated, and in full length. Of these four remain in a capital state of preservation, except as regards the face, which, in every instance, has been erased by the mischievous zeal of the Cromwellian iconoclasts. The labels attached to each, however, generally serve to identify the person whom the figure is intended to represent, although from the

effect of time and partial erasure it is extremely difficult to make out their entire meaning.

The figure on the pannel nearest to the modern door of the pulpit, represents St. Augustin in profile. He wears a red mantle over a green under garment, the folds of both being painted with extraordinary power and fidelity. He has a cape of miniver, and on his head a cap surrounded by the nimbus, which here, as in the other figures, is burnished in gold. The fingers of one hand are placed between the leaves of a half-open missal, while the others are concealed in the drapery. On a scroll partially surrounding the figure is the inscription :—

Implet. spiritu sancto predicat veritatem. Augustin.

The figure is seated on a kind of altar tomb as in the other instances, and the prevailing back-ground of this panel is blue, thickly studded with stars, sprigs, and birds in gold. The next in order, occupying the central pannel of the pulpit, is intended, we imagine, to represent Ignatius, but the label annexed is so much defaced and obscure, that it is difficult to determine this point. The figure presents a full face, and is clothed in a rich mantle of green over an under garment of white, the former being trimmed with a deep border of gold thickly

studded with jewellery. The inscription, as far as it can be made out, is to the following effect :—

*Etiam predicabit et perfectus audien. dñini * * * ti.*

The ground of the pannel is scarlet, sprinkled as before.

The third pannel bears the effigies of St. Jerome, on a ground of blue, similarly ornamented as in the preceding cases. The figure is clad in a long flowing mantle of red, lined with white, shoes appearing from beneath. He wears a peculiar scarlet cap, surmounted by the nimbus, with the following label, of which the first word is illegible :—

** * * sermonis pulcri tu da Beat. Jeronimus.*

The fourth pannel has the representation of St. Ambrose, executed with considerable spirit. The robe is full and flowing, of a rich green colour, lined with white, the scull-cap encircled by the nimbus. The legend

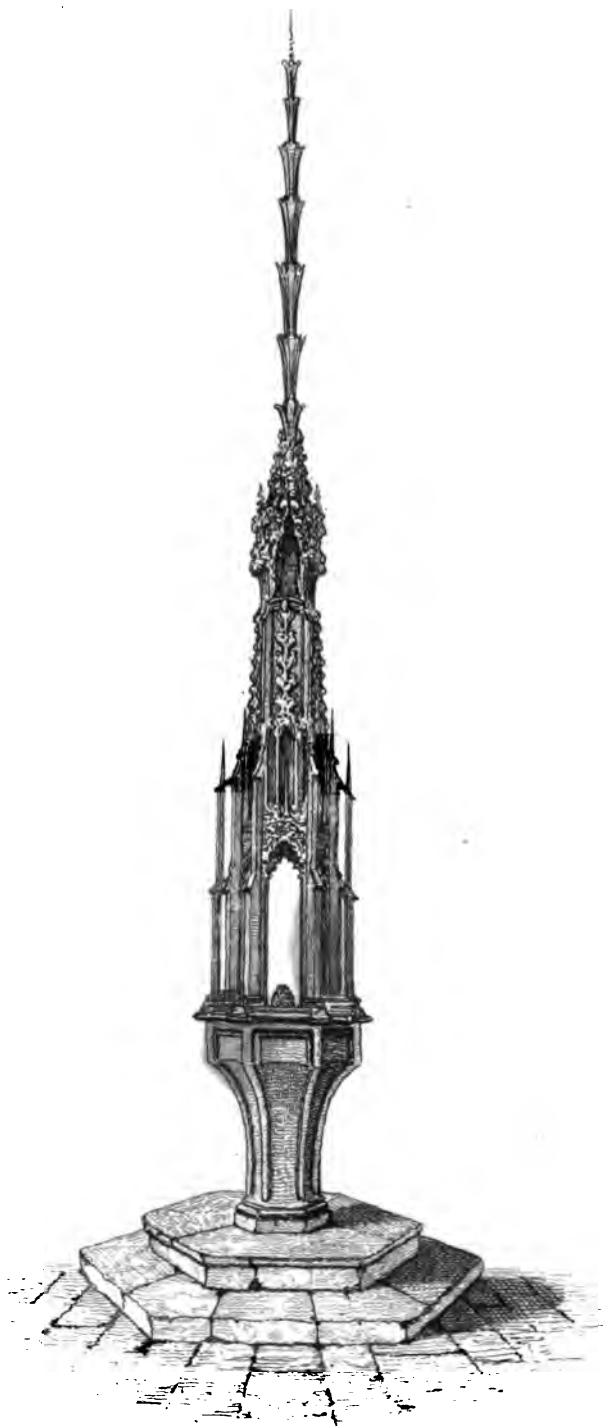
Evangeliū metes dum rigat. Scē. Ambrosi.

The ground is red, with the same rich decoration as before.

The whole of the interior of the pulpit is painted of a vivid scarlet colour, and evidently preserves much of its original appearance. The paintings evince a style of art coteremporary with the figures on the remaining portion

of the roodloft screen, to be noticed hereafter; and were possibly executed by the same hand, if they are not of an earlier date, which certain indications seem to warrant. Altogether this curious remnant of ancient art is an interesting and uncommon feature in a village church, although it has not hitherto attracted the attention it merits.

The most prominent object of interest, however, in this part of the church, and that which immediately rivets the attention of the spectator, is the Font, with its elaborate and elegant canopy. The font stands immediately in the centre of the nave, at its western extremity, and consists of a plain hexagon of stone, supported by a single shaft, and resting on a basement raised two steps from the level of the pavement. The basin has nothing remarkable in its appearance, and most probably is of comparatively recent date, as it is palpably out of proportion with its cover. This last is a lofty tabernacle of rich and complicated shrine-work, diminishing to a graceful spire, and rising nearly to the roof of the church, from whence it is suspended by a gilt dove with outspread wings. Some idea of the whole may be derived from the accompanying illustration, which conveys far more accurately than any verbal description the peculiar



Enched by H. Nimham. from a Drawing by C. Wright.

THE FONT.

character of this almost unique contrivance. This is also said to have once formed part of the furniture of the Priory Church, and from its elaborate and unusual finish, there is strong reason to suppose this to have been the case. The material of which it is constructed is the sweet chesnut, and the wood is in every part as firm and sound as when first put together. The appearance of this canopy in its original freshness, must have been brilliant and gorgeous in the extreme. The colours employed were white, of the purest and most perfect brilliancy, alternating with scarlet and green, of tint equally vivid, and thickly covered with cinquefoil rosettes in gold, the whole so disposed as to impress the eye with the most pleasing combination, instead of the tawdry and unmeaning glare which such an arrangement would seem to imply. About sixty or seventy years since, the then incumbent caused the gilding to be retouched, and the whole to be repainted; and this was done of one uniform scarlet, thus completely destroying the original effect, but as this coat of colour has flaked off in many places, it is easy to perceive what its appearance was in its parti-coloured condition. The groined roof of the shrine work is lined in the interstices of the gilded ribs with rich crimson velvet, and beneath it, most probably, once stood figures

of the Virgin and Child, occupying the place now filled by a gilt fir-cone, an ornament not at all in keeping with the rich fretwork of the canopy. The niches ranged around the tapering pinnacle of the cover were also doubtless intended for the reception of small figures, and were probably so occupied at first, although an unmeaning point of wood is now the substitute. When the basin was required to be used, the lower part of the canopy was easily raised, folding back upon its own shaft, on the principle of the telescope, and thus it would remain suspended for as long a period as necessary, supported by counterpoise weights in the interior, connected with cords and pullies concealed in the substance of the tracery, and acting precisely in the same way as a modern window sash; at the conclusion of the service the cover was easily replaced on the orifice of the basin by a slight pressure of the hand. The whole of this contrivance is exceedingly curious and interesting, as exhibiting at once a specimen of art and mechanical ingenuity of a period at least as remote as the fifteenth century. It certainly merits complete restoration, which might be effected at no very considerable cost.

It is presumed that the windows throughout the building were once filled, or partially so, with stained

and painted glass, because considerable traces of it have been observed in each that has hitherto been examined. Such, too, was almost universally the case in our parochial churches, until the intemperate zeal of the deluded Parliamentarians under Cromwell decreed the indiscriminate destruction of everything that in the most remote degree savoured of what they deemed to be superstition; forgetting that it was nothing less than the same feeling, under another semblance, which prompted them to the wanton outrage! Thus windows, replete with "storied pane," and most interesting as furnishing examples of a rare and beautiful art, were unsparingly sacrificed to appease the fanatic bigotry of reckless madmen. In some cases, whole subjects were fortunately removed by the timely interference of some considerate churchwarden, and concealed in a place of security until the passing away of the iconoclastic *furor* would permit of their replacement,—but such instances were rare. In others the hasty application of whitewash to the unconscious glass served to conceal the offending tracery, and thus it was suffered to pass unscathed; and again in others, the zealous emissaries who thus "thought to do God service," and in the same hurricane to extirpate Popery and High Church sentiments from the universe,

contented themselves by simply punching out the devoted heads of the saints, angels, and martyrs represented on the pane, thinking thereby that they had effectually achieved the laudable work of crushing "the serpent's head," and thus rendering his further influence powerless! In this way fragments, and sometimes important ones, have descended to our time in a tolerable state of preservation, and in some places in such abundance that their collection into one window becomes a matter deserving of some little care and attention.

Such is the case with the parish church of Castleacre. The windows being in progress of indispensable and complete repair, the fragments of stained glass which abound in them, (though for the most part much mutilated,) have been carefully collected and cleaned, whereby many small subjects of considerable interest have been developed, and it is purposed to place these all together in a window by themselves, where they will continue for many years to transmit the rich and varied light which erst beamed through every casement in the sacred edifice. There seems every reason to suppose that the general use of stained glass in our churches did not originate in considerations of mere ornament only, but that it was an expedient whereby the strong light of a

glaring summer sun might be softened, subdued, and shaded, to the comfort and convenience of the crowds of worshippers who then usually thronged the sacred edifice. The incalculable superiority of this elegant expedient to the miserable substitute furnished by the modern application of paltry blinds of brown or coloured holland, will not admit of a moment's question.

But the particular reason why we notice the stained glass in this place is, that a fragment of it serves incidentally to throw some light upon the nature of at least one of the pursuits followed by the inmates of the neighbouring Priory, and thus possesses additional interest to the observer. A portion of the glass represents a female figure, clad in a mantle of rich blue tint clasped at the throat, and seated on a low altar tomb, occupied in playing on a cithern or dulcimer, which is reposing on her lap. The figure, with the exception of the head, is perfect, and finished with great skill and neatness. Immediately beneath it, and indeed forming the basement of the subject, is part of an inscription, recording the name of the artist and his place of abode. The letters are in the old English character, of bright yellow hue upon a ground of clear brown, and are each about an inch in height. The name of the artist is unfortu-

nately broken away and irretrievably lost, but that which remains is to the following effect :—

— — — — — *CASCELAERE FECIT.*

Thus we have indisputable proof that this particular subject at least was the work of a native artist, and most probably it applies to the entire window of which it formed a part. And if one window were executed here, might not *all* have been so? The supposition is, at least, possible, and when we reflect that the art of staining and painting upon glass was an employment practised with admirable success by the monastics of old, and the proximity of the Priory, of which the parish church was a dependency, it becomes highly probable.

Thus we have direct evidence of the successful cultivation of art, at least in one beautiful department, by the Cluniacs of Acre, and may not the remark be extended with reference to another branch of the pictorial science? May not the pulpit, already noticed, and the rood-loft screen, have been equally indebted to the same fraternity for their embellishment? We only suggest the matter, for in the absence of everything in the shape of tangible proof, it is impossible to determine. There is, in fact, much doubt and obscurity respecting

the origin of the beautiful painted screens which formerly predominated so extensively in our parochial churches, more especially in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, and the subject merits a more minute examination than we are at present able to devote to it. It is thought by some, and with considerable semblance of probability, that they are of Flemish origin, or at least that Flemings, from the proximity of the above-named counties to their own shores, resorting hither in considerable numbers, introduced the art amongst us. It may be so; but where would the practice receive such encouragement, or where could it be so securely followed, as in the monasteries? And if Flemings introduced the art, monks may have acquired and pursued it. The history of early art would acquire considerable interest from a careful and elaborate inquiry on this point.

The rood-loft screen at Castleacre, to judge from the small portion that remains of it, was doubtless of rich and highly finished adornment. It occupied the customary station, at the junction of the nave and chancel, and the two doors connected with it may still be observed on the right hand pier, looking east. The lower arch conducts to a narrow stair in the thickness of the wall, the upper one opened upon the loft from

whence rose the rood itself with its adjuncts. The lower pannelling of the screen is all that is now left to indicate its quality, and this presents us with exceedingly well-finished paintings of the apostles, grouped six on each side of the central entrance to the chancel or choir. The minute and careful finish of the features and hands of the several figures, the natural and easy flow of the drapery, and the rich though harmonious blending of the colouring, evince a degree of skill in the artist of no mean order. His intention seems to have been to convey the general idea of a painted window, for the pannelling is arranged in six divisions, three on either side, bearing the semblance of pointed windows of rich and elaborate tracery, each window containing the effigies of two apostles, the one on a general ground of scarlet, the other deep green, and so on alternately; all being starred and spotted with gilding, in a similar way to the pannels on the pulpit. The latter, however, do not, we imagine, evince so high a degree of art as the figures on the screen; there is a formality, a stiffness, and a poverty of resource about them which these last do not possess, while the effigies of the apostles are clothed in drapery of considerable variety of colour, ingeniously arranged and with as little of the prevailing stiffness

of the age as we can meet with in any other instance. They will amply repay the close examination of the curious. The elevation of the entire screen from the pavement to the level of the loft seems to have been 14 feet, its upper portion consisting of bold open window tracery, painted, gilt, and interspersed with well-executed carvings of birds, bats, wiverns, chimæras, and foliage, the several pannels and the architrave being bordered by a simple moulding, painted of a rich deep blue, and encircled by a broad fillet of burnished gold.

The chancel, upon which the screen opened, is of bold dimensions, well proportioned, and still retaining its regularity of form, though sadly disfigured in one part by the unsightly intervention of a modern pew, to make room for which a group of *misereres*, corresponding with some still remaining on the opposite side, were removed, and have since been lost. The quaint, but comfortable old seats just alluded to, may be observed on the south side of the chancel, immediately at the back of the rood-loft screen, so that their occupants fronted the high altar. They are three in number, in an admirable state of preservation, and each bearing a well-executed device in wood, on the under part of the seat, which turns up,

as usual in such contrivances. The devices are different, and do not at all partake of that monstrous character which is so frequently met with in similar instances, to say nothing of grossness, which is by no means uncommon. Two of the devices are well worthy of attention, the one for the spirit with which a sort of gorgon's head is designed, the tongue protruding from the mouth, the other for the delicate finish with which an eagle with outspread wings is represented in high relief. The miserere was a commodious stall furnished with arms and a high back, partaking somewhat of the character of a modern library chair;—the seat, however, (which was perhaps occasionally covered with a cushion,) was constructed to turn on a suitable hinge, presenting, beneath, a narrow ledge supported by some fanciful device, and further connected with ornamental foliage. It does not very clearly appear what was the purpose of this ledged subsidiary seat. It is said by some to have been contrived to kneel upon, but in this case the occupant must have turned his back upon the altar, a not very probable attitude during the celebration of mass, not to mention the inconvenient height of the ledge from the floor. It would rather seem to have been contrived to serve

as a kind of seat or resting-place during particular parts of the service, or on especial occasions, when the officials were supposed by the generality of the congregation to maintain a standing posture, which, as they might be expected to do so during several hours, they would retain a very nearly upright position, while they were in fact receiving every support and easily resting upon the supplementary seat of the miserere. We know not how far this supposition might be borne out by the actual practice,—but it is obvious the appendage could not have been contrived for mere ornament alone, for the ledge is universal wherever the miserere occurs.

The high altar was raised by three steps from the general level of the pavement, and on its north side was a sacristy, now serving the purpose of a vestry; a commodious apartment, having formerly above it a charnel chamber in which were deposited the bones taken up in the process of making new graves in the adjacent churchyard. These, however, were removed, and reinterred some years since, and the two chambers thrown into one, as they still continue. There are, doubtless, sedilia and a piscina on the south wall of the chancel, as strong indications of this being the case present

themselves on sounding; but the general features of the chancel have been so completely *modernised*, that, without considerable trouble, it might be difficult to recover their original bearing. The effect of the east window is sadly marred by the intervention of a huge beam, which crosses the vault nearly at its top, and the lights in the upper portion have long been obliterated and filled up with cement. It would really be desirable to restore this window to something of its original beauty, which might readily be done. The lower part is lancet-shape, surmounted by a wheel or rose mullion, and flanked by ornamental crockets, the whole presenting a good specimen of early English verging upon the decorated style.

The sacramental plate is of a richness of rare occurrence in our village districts. The material is silver superbly gilt, and renovated through the public spirit of one of the churchwardens not many years since. The plate consists of a tall and massy flagon of antique and graceful form, having the I. H. S. encircled by a glory with the name of the parish deeply graven on the front; a paten plain, but massy, and a chalice and cover of very elegant figure, chased and ornamented with scroll-work, and bearing the date of 1694.

This last was the pious gift of a lady of the name of Eleanor Gibbon.

The brasses, so common in most of the Norfolk churches, and so inimitably illustrated by the late John Sell Cotman, are here exceedingly scanty, and of them but one or two insignificant specimens remain. There are traces of a label and shields on one or two slabs within a few paces of the lower step of the altar, but the brasses are gone. A plain brass at the west end of the church contains an *Orate* in behalf of William Fuller, who died on the 12th of October, 1523, and a brass about the centre of the nave appears, from the date, to be among the latest specimens of that description of monumental inscription. It is to the following effect:—

Here lieth bvried Marie Emmilie some time the wife of
Edmvnd Hvdson, Draper, daughter of Edward Barkham,
of Southaker. She departed this life the 18th day of
August, 1612.

Other monumental effigies or tablets are equally meagre with the foregoing, nor are there any requiring particular record, except that in the chancel rest the remains of the Rev. James Thom, G.S.T.D., Abrædonensis, formerly vicar of this parish, and holding in addition other more valuable preferment. He was a zealous antiquary, and

took great interest in the remains which adorn the parish, and if he did not always manifest unimpeachable judgment in his decisions and restorations, he can at least fairly claim the meed of diligent devotion to his favourite pursuit.

The church, of which we have thus given a detailed account, is dedicated in the name of St. James, and the benefice is a vicarage of very humble value, though assisted by grants from the Bounty Fund of Queen Anne. Probably its revenues were not always of such comparative unimportance as now. The present structure was erected by one of the priors and the chapter of the neighbouring Priory, who were the impropriators of the advowson. They of course held the tithes, and the incumbent who was inducted to the benefice was provided with lodging and commons in the Priory itself, in addition to a clear income of 10*l.* per annum, a sum of infinitely greater value in those days than now, as we have already had occasion to show. Besides, the customary fees and mortuaries were no matter of indifference at a time when the church's aid was sought on every occasion and in every variety of form. The vicarage, therefore, was a sufficient and ample maintenance for its possessor, whilst the great tithes produced a valuable revenue to the treasury of

the chapter. After the surrender, the impropriation and patronage remained in the hands of the Crown during the whole time it retained possession of the rights and revenues of the forfeited monastery, and ultimately passed with the site of the latter into the hands of the Norfolk family. From that period they have shared the fluctuations of the general property, as will appear from the subjoined table of the incumbents of the benefice, from the period of its connexion with the Priory to the present time,—following the authority of Blomefield, and extending the list to the actual incumbency :—

VICARS.	DATE OF INDUCTION. BY WHOM PRESENTED.
John de Wysete . . .	A.D. 1307 The Prior.
Robert de Folkestone . . .	1314
John de Brecham (Bircham) . .	1320
John de Warrenne . . .	1329
Ralph de Witlock . . .	1349 { The Bishop of Norwich (by lapse.)
William Norman . . .	1374 The Prior.
William de Horndon . . .	1383
John de Walpole . . .	1386
John Stegg or Stock . . .	1392
Gilbert Bocher . . .	1438
Richard Bocher . . .	1448
Richard Salisbury . . .	1449
John Sennowe . . .	1452

guilds throughout the land, and individually in our cities and larger towns, presented too inviting a field for the rapacity of the selfish monarch, and the countenance and encouragement which they received from the authorities of the church afforded a convenient plea for an attack upon them; and, therefore, although in the early days of the dissolution of the religious houses, the king affected respect for the constitution of the guilds, and even pledged himself to maintain them inviolate, his plastic conscience ere long received new light upon the subject, and they were constrained, equally with others, to contribute the contents of their coffers to the craving vortex of the Court of Augmentations. The consequences were felt for many a long year afterward, and trade of various kinds lost caste in point of respectability, unity, and mutual interchange of good-will, which, even at this distance of time, it may be questioned whether it has altogether recovered. The still existing foundations in many of our large provincial towns afford incontrovertible proof of the influence, wealth, and importance of our ancient guilds.

THE PARISH.



ANY years before the faintest murmur of Norman hostility was heard to threaten the English shores, a considerable district of the county of Norfolk, designated under the general name of Acra or Acre, recognised as its liege lord a powerful Saxon Thane, bearing the name of Toche or Toke; whose possessions extended still further than the district alluded to, and who dwelt among them in all the rude splendour and independent bearing of an Anglo-Saxon chief.

Acra comprised three parishes, distinct from, and independent of, each other, though held under one chief. The first of these, the most important in extent, was distinguished simply as Acre, or more particularly Est-Acre,—the others, West-Acre, and South Acre, according to their relative positions with regard to each other.

Time rolled on, and the conquering William, flushed with success and imbued with the spirit of a stern, uncompromising age, exerted more than a conqueror's right in the disposal of his conquest.—The unfortunate Toche, whose only crime was a natural desire to retain his ancestral inheritance, was, without scruple or compensation, ejected from all his possessions and permitted to become the feudal retainer of a foreign master. His broad lands were parcelled out among the early followers of the Conqueror's standard, and Est-Acre fell to the share of De Warrenne. How the latter erected his stately castle and noble priory within the limits of this parish, we have already noticed, and Acre became the scene of baronial grandeur and cloistered seclusion. What might be the actual condition of the parish at the early period referred to it is impossible to decide with precision, but the humble dwellings of the few Anglo-Saxon serfs, who tilled the surrounding lands, were probably situated in a direction a little to the north of the present village, for it is not likely that the spacious outworks of De Warrenne's castle would embrace within its boundaries any meaner tenements. The inference is supported by the palpable traces of buildings, of a later period, some moated, in

the above quarter, occupied probably by retainers of the De Warrenne estate, and serving to point to the original site of the village.

It was not until the castle began to decline from its proud pre-eminence that the modern parish gradually encroached upon its courts, and no sooner was the stronghold fairly abandoned than the work of demolition began, and cottages arose within the very penetralia of ballium and barbican. Thence it acquired and has ever since retained the distinctive name of Castle-Acre.

The subsequent suppression of the Priory, and its consequent desertion, opened another quarry of ample material for the building enterprises of the increasing parish, and there is abundant evidence to show that they were resorted to without much delicacy or misgiving either as to quantity or quality. In short, almost all the dwellings erected prior to within the last twenty or thirty years consist wholly of material supplied from the adjacent ruins, and bear the stamp of a singular and peculiar character. It is mainly owing to this circumstance that the parish presents to the eye of the traveller a quaintness of appearance of unusual occurrence in our rural districts.

There are three principal manors, carrying fine arbi-

trary, and distinguished as the Prior's, Arundel's, and the Earl's, from their former possessors ; but with the dry details of these it is not our intention to weary the reader, as there is no remarkable tenure connected with any of them which can merit particular notice. Suffice it to say, that the increasing population of the place and the frequent transfer of copyhold from seller to purchaser, renders the manorial privileges of this parish of some importance to their owner.

And here one circumstance connected with the modern history of the parish deserves to be noted. Castleacre entitles its illustrious possessors, the Earls of Leicester, of Holkham, to a seat among the peers of the realm as Barons Castleacre, a distinction to which the family alluded to were justly elevated in the first year of the reign of our present gracious Sovereign ; and thus the ancient barony of the De Warrennes has resumed somewhat of its pristine importance in the persons of its modern proprietors.

The population of Castleacre, according to the census of 1841, amounts to 1494 souls, a calculation, we should say, rather within the bounds of actual fact than exceeding them. The inhabitants are exclusively agricultural, and generally of a very humble caste ; although abject

poverty happily does not exist among them, still their means are exceedingly moderate, and the degree of intelligence prevalent, as usually happens, is proportionate to the extent of their resources. It has been the fashion to single out the parish of Castleacre as the most conspicuous in point of demoralisation and general depravity within the circuit of many miles, and until within the last few years there has been, we fear, but too strong ground for the conclusion ; but then it is only justice to indicate the main source of this evil, and the still-existing obstacle to its effectual eradication. It is simply this : A custom has for many years prevailed in the place, and been encouraged by the occupiers in adjacent parishes, to farm out the work necessary to be done on their respective lands to one or two individuals, who shall provide hands to accomplish it in the best manner and on the most reasonable terms. These parties are termed *gang* masters, and a very significant term it is, for surely no gang of wretched slaves beneath the sweltering sun of the tropics, could materially fall beneath the generality of persons thus assembled together in intellectual debasement and moral depravity. The gang-masters, anxious to reap as much advantage to themselves as possible from their bargain with their employers, seek

about in all directions for idle hands to execute their work on the cheapest terms they can procure them at. What is the result?—Vagrants,—the very scum and refuse of the county jails,—homeless, houseless wanderers, with perhaps the brand of infamy upon them, if passing within the neighbourhood, can and have obtained employment for a week, a fortnight, or it may be only a few days, without question or hindrance. Short as their time of service might prove, it has been sufficient to inoculate the place, in the congenial hot-bed of the ale-house, with the virus of depravity, vice, and cunning, which these masters of their art import from their former haunts and occupations, and having sown the seed of mischief, they pass on and give place to another batch of worthies of similar stamp. Such *has been* the case, and we rejoice to hope that we may speak of this evil in some degree in the past tense ;—the gang-masters have latterly become somewhat more cautious in their selection of hands. But the system itself is altogether bad, debasing to the parties employed, and injurious to the native labourers in the parish, and nothing short of its entire abolition can secure results permanently beneficial to the social improvement of the community. Until this is effected, other means of elevating the moral character of

the humbler classes will experience but partial success, and yet such means are in diligent operation, and hitherto with happy and palpable advantage. A large National School is daily endeavouring to counteract the pernicious influence of the gangs upon the rising generation; a clothing society invites those of maturer age to reap the advantage of frugality and prudent forethought; and benefit-clubs (the lingering apologies of the ancient guilds) still exist amongst us, though of questionable utility. Perseverance in these means and similar expedients may do much, but unless the blow is struck at *the root* of the mischief, we apprehend no very solid advantage will ever be gained in undermining the stronghold of depravity. If the occupiers who continue to uphold the system would one and all combine in the exercise of the moral courage necessary to forego the singular advantages they obtain from its encouragement,

“ Ay,—*there 's* the rub,”—

we are persuaded they would eventually reap a rich harvest of satisfaction from their determination.

The features of the landscape are of a bold undulating character, prettily broken by low plantations towards the west, and the fields everywhere exhibit the admirable

results of practical agriculture in its highest perfection. The well-merited influence of the late lamented proprietor, the greatest patron and the truest friend to agriculture the world ever saw, and the very high character of the occupiers for worth, experience, and capital, have contributed to this effect, and rendered the farming at Castleacre and its vicinity a finished school of the art.

We have already mentioned the Nar, a pretty, clear, rapid stream, which winds its sinuous course through the parish, forming its principal boundary to the south, and was formerly navigable for small craft to within a short distance of the place. This stream must have proved of inestimable advantage to the monastics, for not only is its water remarkably pure and pellucid, but it is literally thronged with shoals of delicate speckled trout, of singular excellence both of colour and flavour. The fish are of two varieties—the common trout, and the true *Trutta Salmo*, or salmon-trout, and these, with the exception of a few rare perch, roach, and dace, are the sole occupants of the stream. The abundance of fish is really extraordinary, when we consider the frequent pilferings to which the stream is unavoidably exposed, and the regular attendance during the season

of sundry eager Waltonians, who have permission from the respective proprietors on either side of the stream to exercise their "*gentle art*," although a fly or a minnow are the most usual as well as the most scientific modes of capture employed. Complete success generally attends these "contemplative" gentlemen's operations, although the fish taken vary in size from half a pound to two pounds and a half, rarely much exceeding the latter weight. In the absence of the superior attractions of a salmon leap, the skilful brother of the angle does not disdain to pursue his sport among the shallow rapids of the Nar.

Such is Castleacre, and such the features which render it equally an object of interest to the antiquary and the general visitor. The Castle, with all its pomp and circumstance of military importance, has passed away,—the Convent, with its results of mingled good and evil, retains but a shadowed outline of its existence,—the sterile wilderness of the adjoining lands has given place to pastures rich with luxuriant herbage, and fields teeming with the glad produce of successful cultivation, and the Nar alone rolls on its silent course unchanged, unchanging, and replete as ever with the same quality of the finny tribe as erst rejoiced the luxurious palates

of the dainty Normans, or compensated the sickly appetite of the shrunken ascetic for the unsavoury mess of black beans and salt with which he was too often constrained to be content. Here we pause, and the indulgent reader, who has had the patience to accompany us thus far, may well be weary of the monotonous garrulity of his companion. We have lingered o'er the past—we have touched upon the present, and we conclude with the expression of bright hope for the future.

“To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”

THE END.

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